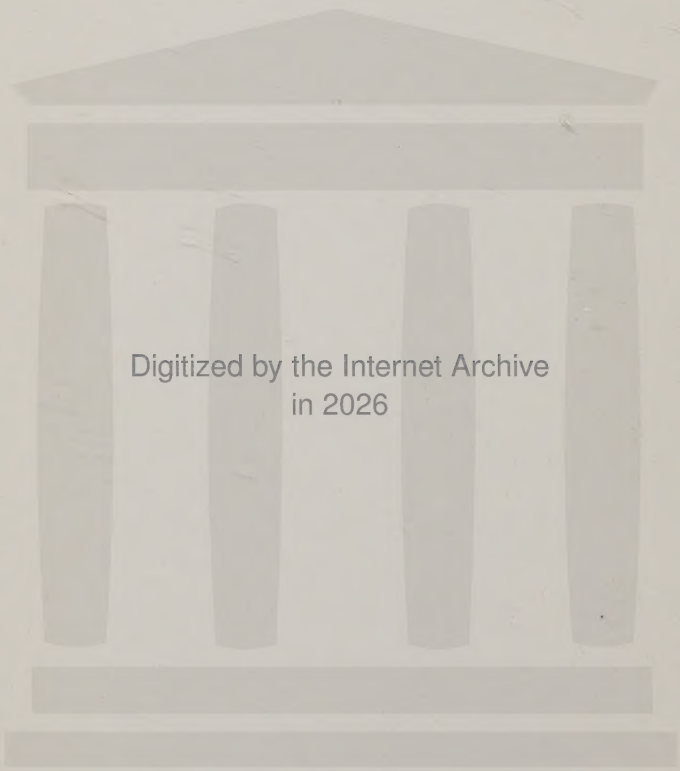
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A SURVEY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

1830-1880

BY

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CHAPTER XV

THE ROSSETTIS

I

After Tennyson, Browning, and Matthew Arnold, the next of the major poets to make his appearance was Dante Gabriel Rossetti [1] (1828-82). With Tennyson, he is the surest artist of his time in verse ; he is also the poet with the steadiest instinct for perfection. In thrift he is surpassed by few English writers of his own rank ; nearly all his original work is contained in two volumes, beautiful in printing and appearance. The first of these, the *Poems* of 1870, was re-issued with changes and re-arrangements in 1881, along with *Ballads and Sonnets*. Rossetti wrote intermittently, and painted much more than he wrote ; and his writing may be thought of as an interlude in his life as a painter. He resorted to words when line and colour would not say what he wished, or all that he wished. But his pictorial sense also shaped his poetry, especially when the poem was written for an existing picture. The picture nearly always came first, *The Blessed Damozel* being an exception. Perhaps Rossetti's verse will outlive his paintings, many of which now seem like the beautiful but mannered dream of a departed generation. His verse is deeply mannered also, or at least is minutely studied ; and every word 'knows the road it came.' But it endures by its force of conception and of passion, and by its compacted subtlety of phrase and music. Rossetti has left less inferior or superfluous verse than any great writer of the age.

His mode of publication disguises the order in which his verses were composed. Many, as he tells us in the preface to the *Poems* of 1870, were 'written between 1847 and 1853,' that is from between the ages of nineteen and twenty-five. Besides *The Blessed Damozel* in its first form, and other pieces, presently to be named, that were published in *The Germ* (1850), these youthful works include *Ave*, portions of *Dante at Verona*, an early draft of *Jenny*, *A Last Confession*, portions of *The Bride's Prelude* (originally called *Bride-Chamber Talk*, and

never finished), *The Portrait*, and the three sonnets called *The Choice*. *The Burden of Nineveh* and *The Staff and Scrip* appeared, in their first shapes, in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* (1856). Well might Rossetti say in 1870 that 'nothing is included which the author believes to be immature.' To the 'intervening period' belong, amongst other things, *Love's Nocturn* and *The Song of the Bower*. In 1862 Mrs. Rossetti died, and the manuscripts of many of the poems were placed in her coffin; and for several years Rossetti painted much and wrote little. In 1868 we hear of several sonnets composed for pictures, like *Sibylla Palmifera* and *Venus Verticordia*; and, next year, of *Troy Town*, *Eden Bower*, and *The Stream's Secret*. The manuscripts were now at last exhumed—an action as sane as the feeling which had prompted their burial was natural and human; and then the volume of 1870 appeared, being the first that Rossetti had published except *The Early Italian Poets* (1861).

He had now a bare twelve years left to him; and for part of that time his powerful spirit was clouded by illness, insomnia, drugs, and morbid ruminations. In 1871 he was attacked by Robert Buchanan, who signed himself 'Thomas Maitland,' in an article called *The Fleshly School of Poetry*, to which he wrote a needless but dignified and conclusive rejoinder, *The Stealthy School of Criticism*. The stealthy critic afterwards retracted openly, but the affair did something to poison Rossetti's peace. Yet he rose above these vapours. About this time he composed *Cloud Confines* ('my very best thing'), *Down Stream*, *Sunset Wings*, part of *Soothsay*, most of *Rose Mary*, and many sonnets for the sequence of *The House of Life*, an instalment of which had appeared in the volume of 1870. The next years were less fertile in poetry, but latterly came *The White Ship* and *The King's Tragedy*, the longest new pieces in the volumes of 1881. In 1886 his brother, William Michael Rossetti (1829-1919), published the *Collected Works*, including a small but costly handful of prose writings.

It is clear from these details that Rossetti's poetic faculty ripened early, in most of its characteristic forms; that he cherished it jealously, constantly revising his work; and that it was unimpaired at the last. Sonnet, narrative, and his own kind of thought-laden lyrics, he wrote with mastery from the beginning. In his handicraft a certain change may be traced. His early creed encouraged the use of clear colours and of simple, or rather thrice-winnowed, diction; but in course of time both the mood and the expression become more intricate, the

result being not less beautiful but often more abstruse, and betraying some tendency to the turbid. This change is evident if we compare *Ave* with *The Stream's Secret*, or *Stratton Water* with *Rose Mary*. Yet it is no unbroken change ; for the complex *Sister Helen* is an early work, and *The White Ship*, which is simple enough, although with a studied simplicity, is a late one. But Rossetti was at first, like Ronsard and Coleridge, the centre of a 'movement' with something of an artistic faith, or programme, attached to it, which though overlaid was never to the end quite effaced.

The Rossetti family predominate in *The Germ*,[1] the four numbers of which appeared in 1850. More than a quarter of the contributions are by Dante and Christina Rossetti, William Michael Rossetti being the editor. *The Blessed Damozel* is there, and *My Sister's Sleep*, and *From the Cliffs*, and *Pax Vobis* (later entitled *World's Worth*), and *The Carillon*, and six 'sonnets on pictures' by old masters ; also the prose romance *Hand and Soul*. Many of these were afterwards to be revised, or even transformed. Here also are *Dream Land* and several other poems by 'Ellen Alleyn' ; *Stars and Moon*, and *The Seasons*, by Coventry Patmore ; and the beginnings of Woolner's *My Beautiful Lady*. The sub-title of the magazine is *Thoughts towards Nature, in Poetry, Literature, and Art*. The wrapper announces the tenet of the group to be a 'rigid adherence to the simplicity of nature' ; and this in fact is all their creed, though it does not express the features common to much of their workmanship. Their primary aims are veracity, freshness of vision, and contempt of convention. But in the result they further aspired to and attained a certain exactness of definition, a love of 'minute particulars,' often symbolically regarded, and also a marked economy of stroke, both in painting and in poetry. This bent is visible in the designs by Holman Hunt, Collinson, Madox Brown, and Deverell, which appear in *The Germ*. The æsthetic papers by F. G. Stephens and the reviews by William Rossetti point in the same direction ; among the subjects of the latter are Clough's *Bothie*, and *The Strayed Reveller*, 'by *A*.' Miss Rossetti, though never a 'member,' really kept closest of all to the original programme by virtue of her natural gift and instinct. The others went their ways ; but from the first, cutting partly across that programme, was something that lay deep in Dante Rossetti, in Patmore, and also in Woolner, namely, the love of felicity and curiosity, of condensation and rich colouring. They like their simplicity to be expensive. Rossetti grew tired of 'the prattle about

Pre-Raphaelitism,' saying that 'what you call the movement was serious enough, but the banding together under that title was all a joke.' He added, to a French admirer, that it was the result of 'la camaraderie, plutôt que la collaboration réelle du style.' All the same, he defines better than anyone the original stamp of that style: 'les qualités de réalisme, émotionnel mais extrêmement minutieux': and these qualities he never lost.

II

Rossetti's reading was not wide, and much of it tells us nothing about his peculiar talent, though his debt to 'Dante and his circle' and to the British popular ballads is obvious. Rossetti's sonnets are often coloured by Milton's; Shakespearian echoes are rarer. Coleridge, Keats, and Tennyson were among his ancestors, as a poem like *Rose Mary* is enough to show. His early enthusiasm for Byron and Shelley gave way to the attraction of Browning; but *A Last Confession* is his chief tribute to that master of the dramatic monologue. One streak in Rossetti's imagination was deepened by his liking for Hoffmann, for Maturin, and for Meinhold, the author of the incomparable *Amber Witch* and of *Sidonia the Sorceress*. To the preternatural, in which most men and more women believe, he was frankly, mediævally, romantically prone. It took little make-believe, we may think, to write *Sister Helen*; and the 'covert place' described in *The Portrait* was easy of access to Rossetti; the place

> Where you might think to find a din
> Of doubtful talk, and a live flame
> Wandering, and many a shape whose name
> Not itself knoweth, and old dew,
> And your own footsteps meeting you,
> And all things going as they came.

He painted such a scene in *How They Met Themselves*. Thus, in his own way, and with the contemporary goblins of Dickens and the occultism of Lytton for rather poor company, Rossetti continued a strain that had been audible in *Christabel* and in *Melmoth the Wanderer*.

He influenced and deflected, for a time, most of those around him, and as a writer he keeps some of his predominance. No poet of this period, apart from Browning, leaves the same sort of dint upon the mind. It would not be easy to make a selection from his works without leaving out something unique. He seldom repeats either himself or others. If he suffers for

anything, it is for his economy, as most writers do for their superfluity. Rossetti's formidable poetic will puts everything ten times through the alembic. Nothing is easy to him, and he cannot make us think it has been easy; but then he does not care how hard it is, if only it is within his scope, and in his choice of theme he seldom errs. This energetic, violent plastic impulse does not lead him to attempt anything on a great scale, except *The House of Life*; his largest works are romances of moderate length. It was well said by Burne-Jones [1] that

> he wanted to keep a poem at boiling-point all the way through, and he did it to that degree that it went into ether with fervent glowing heat before he had done with it. The short form of his poems helped him to this. As soon as the pot went off the boil he 'd take it from the fire.

But whenever Rossetti, like his blessed damozel, has 'some new thing to say,' he is rarely satisfied till he has made some new mould, or measure, or poetic dialect in which to say it. This originality of form is seen from the first. In one of his earliest poems, *My Sister's Sleep*, which he revised freely and favoured little, he employed the *In Memoriam* stanza for elegy in print at least as early as Tennyson. *Wellington's Funeral* is also to a new tune, though it shows those marks of effort which Rossetti's last touches were apt to deepen rather than to smooth away. In *The Burden of Nineveh*, which is the burden of London, the repeated and reverberant rhymes sound like the hammer-strokes of the prehistoric masons. This poem, however, began simply as a *pièce d'occasion*; and the satiric verse about the

> school-foundations in the act
> Of holiday, three files compact,

which somewhat cheapens the effect, is a remnant of the original overture.

The Blessed Damozel,[2] written first at about the age of nineteen, exists in four recensions (1850, 1856, 1870, 1881). Verses are dropped, new ones are added, lines and words are altered, even the stops and dashes are repeatedly modified. Rossetti was as strict with himself as Gray; he would sacrifice a noble verse if it seemed out of harmony or scale; we do not find this one after the first version:

> 'Yea, verily; when he is come
> We will do thus and thus:
> Till this my vigil seem quite strange
> And almost fabulous;
> We two will live at once, one life;
> And peace shall be with us.'

In *The Raven* (1845)

Poe had done the utmost it was possible to do with the grief of the lover on earth, and so I determined to reverse the conditions, and give utterance to the yearning of the loved one in heaven.

So Rossetti is reported to have said; yet the grief of the lover is still audible in his own poem, though in an undertone, and the transpositions of verses in the successive editions are largely directed to finding the right place and emphasis for it. The lover hears, ever more articulately, the plaint of the blessed damozel, and sees her in vision. Her lament, her longing, the disappointment of her prayer for reunion as the angels pass by her to 'distant spheres,' are part of his trance. They are never to be reunited souls. Would it have been a meeting of spirits only? Do not ask; the distinction has vanished in heaven, as it had 'once' vanished on earth, between spirit and body; and how should heaven be poorer than earth? Such questions fall outside the text of the poem, but they ask themselves in view of Rossetti's faith as to the nature of true love:

> Thy soul I know not from thy body, nor
> Thee from myself, neither our love from God.

The final handiwork of this great short poem he never excelled. A new style, indeed, began with *The Blessed Damozel*. A harmony of three distinct elements is achieved, namely, the clean, pure, missal-like colours and noble gestures; the double plaint, ending on the note of frustration; and lastly, the Miltonic effect of infinite dividing space, with the far-off sun, and the 'tides of day and night' that 'ridge the void.' We are not meant to bear too hard on the cosmography, which was objected to as inconsistent by Gordon Hake,[1] Rossetti's friend. But these three features have a value in the poem which only the first of them could fully receive in the subsequent picture.

III

Along with this original writing, and serving powerfully to refine it, came Rossetti's schooling as a translator. In early youth he had finished many of his versions of *The Early Italian Poets* (1861). Afterwards he revised and re-sorted the contents, and called the new edition (1874) *Dante and his Circle, with the Italian Poets preceding him*. Opening with *Vita Nuova*, the first section now centres upon Dante, whose sonnets, *canzoni*, and *ballate*, in so far as they concern Dante's friends or Beatrice,

are arranged next, along with the replies of the friends. Therewith come other works of Guido Cavalcanti and Cino da Pistoia ; of the ' scamp ' Cecco Angiolieri, and many besides. The second (originally the first) part concerns ' poets chiefly preceding Dante,' and also some later than he, such as Fazio degli Uberti. At least sixty writers in all are represented ; and Rossetti's notes, biographical and critical, are still the most pithy introduction which the English reader can find to the subject. Cary and Ugo Foscolo had been chiefly occupied with Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, and the writers of the Renaissance. Though the *Divine Comedy*, and especially the *Hell*, had been much translated and studied (amongst others by Charles Cayley, the friend of the Rossettis) little was known of the young, the lyrical Dante, and of his ' circle ' still less. No one has ever been qualified like Rossetti for the task he took up. Three parts Italian, a native speaker and writer, and an English poet, he had grown up in the cult of Dante. His father Gabriele was a copious and gifted expositor, of an extreme allegorical school. His elder sister, Maria Francesca, published in 1871 her fervid and beautiful work, *A Shadow of Dante*, a summary of the *Comedy* containing long extracts in English verse. Dante Gabriel was early acquainted with the poets that surround Dante. His labours as a presenter of them served both his countries well, and also dyed his own talent ineffaceably.

The preface shows the conscience of the artist in translation, at full stretch :

> Often would he [the translator] avail himself of any special grace of his own idiom and epoch, if only his will belonged to him ; often would some cadence serve him but for his author's structure—some structure but for his author's cadence ; often the beautiful turn of a stanza must be weakened to adopt some rhyme which will tally, and he sees the poet revelling in abundance of language where himself is scantily supplied. Now he would slight the matter for the music, and now the music for the matter ; but no,—he must deal to each alike. Sometimes too a flaw in the work galls him, and he would fain remove it, doing for the poet that which his age denied him ; but no,—it is not in the bond.

In this spirit Rossetti trains himself to reproduce not only the delicacies, in prose and verse, of the *Vita Nuova*, but the varied styles of the subtle and passionate Cavalcanti, the gay sprightly Sacchetti, and the pictorial and realistic Folgore da San Geminiano. The versions are a close tracing, the original metres being kept, and the poetical accent is everywhere. ' The

lifeblood of rhythmical translation,' he said, 'is this commandment, that a good poem shall not be turned into a bad one.' He observed the commandment also in his renderings from Hartmann von Aue, from Villon, from 'Old French,' from *The Leaf* of Leopardi, and from the Paolo and Francesca passage in the *Hell*. This last had been a favourite victim of translators; the curious can compare their flounderings over the last line,

> E caddi, come corpo morto cade,

with Rossetti's

> And even as a dead body falls, I fell;

which is so simple that no one had thought of it before. In *Dante at Verona*, where fact and tradition are freely woven up with Rossetti's own imaginings, and the resulting portrait of Dante's mind and temper is only matched by a few lines of Byron, Rossetti is a great ethical poet, and it was Dante who helped him to become one. His early sonnets *Vain Virtues* (*House of Life*, lxxxv.) and *The Choice* (lxxi.-lxxiii.) are in the spirit of the *Purgatory*. His whole conception of love, it will be seen, on its inner or sacramental side, is touched by Dante's; but this conception was of gradual growth. It began, possibly, with his work upon the *Vita Nuova*:

> At length within this book I found pourtrayed
> Newborn that Paradisal Love of his,
> And simple like a child; with whose clear aid
> I understood;

and it grew through study and personal experience working in harmony. His pictures connected with Dante make the process plainer. He never wrought anything, were it either in words or colour, more exquisite than his painting *Beata Beatrix*, where his own and Dante's spirit are blended. The lady is in a trance which gives her a foretaste of the blessedness soon to be hers. Rossetti wrote no verse to accompany this picture. In his sonnet, *Dantis Tenebræ*, made in memory of his father, he again declares his allegiance to the Florentine.

Though he stood outside the vestibule of Dante's church, he could see, hear, and apprehend the ritual within. Some of the mysteries of feeling which are common to the Christian world, but are expressed with peculiar intensity in Catholic art and letters, needed no explaining to Rossetti. This intimate perception can be traced in *Ecce Ancilla Domini*, in *Ave*, and in *World's Worth*, where the Father Hilary is depicted as moving ever further and further from mundane things:

And now the sacring-bell rang clear
And ceased; and all was awe,—the breath
Of God in man that warranteth
The inmost utmost things of Faith.
He said, 'O God, my world in Thee!'

Dramatic sympathy so deep can only be rooted in something ancestral, in the lifeblood of the writer.

IV

In *The House of Life*, and in the sonnets on poets, pictures, the seasons, and public events, Rossetti puts all of his mind and craft into every word. Often the stricter Italian form is observed, the divisions in the thought corresponding to those in the metre, with a 'turn' and pause after the octave, and the rhymes being arranged in the orthodox way. But there are several metrical freedoms.[1] Sometimes, as with Milton, the break at the end of the octave is disregarded, and often the poem is printed without the 'line spacing' at that point. The Miltonic note is heard, above all, in the more strenuous sonnets of ethical tone. That *On the Refusal of Aid between Nations*, which is assigned to the year 1848 but is of universal application, is a case in point. Rossetti knows that the sonnet is made for man and not man for the sonnet, and he departs in sundry other ways from rule. Indeed, in nearly one-third of the whole number that he printed (a hundred and forty) he imports, as Wordsworth liked to do, a fresh rhyme in the sixth and seventh lines; and in more than one-sixth, after starting regularly, he ends with a couplet; though the exact Elizabethan chime is rare, such as is found in *Youth and Change*:

Only this laurel dreads no winter days;
Take my last gift; thy heart hath sung my praise.

This practice, we know, is supposed to mar the balance of the poem by driving the emphasis too far forwards. But sonnets like *A Sea-Spell* or *Venus Victrix* show that such a fear is superstitious. Both licences are there employed, and it is clear that the chief emphasis, duly coming at the break, is upheld perfectly and not disturbed by the final rhymes, as one example may show:

Her lute hangs shadowed in the apple-tree,
  While flashing fingers weave the sweet-strung spell
  Between its chords; and as the wild notes swell,
The sea-bird for those branches leaves the sea.
But to what sound her listening ear stoops she?
  What netherworld gulf-whispers doth she hear,
  In answering echoes from what planisphere,
Along the wind, along the estuary?

She sinks into her spell: and when full soon
Her lips move and she soars into her song,
What creatures of the midmost main shall throng
In furrowed surf-clouds to the summoning rune:
Till he, the fated mariner, hears her cry,
And up her rock, bare-breasted, comes to die?

Overwrought, as so often, in language, but perfect in structure. All these deviations from rule—the new rhyme in the second quatrain, the obscuration of the break, and the final couplet—are found together in the whimsical *Match with the Moon*.

The House of Life recalls Shakespeare rather than Dante in its frankness, its richness, and its many obscurities. The arrangement of the sequence in the volume of 1881 by no means represents the order of composition, but is an artistic one; and perhaps the same is true of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, supposing that he authorised the arrangement of 1609. But in *The House of Life* there is no drama; and for this inveterate son of Romance only two persons in the world might seem to exist. And yet the world of men is not forgotten. As in Shakespeare, there is a constant outlook on the mystery of evil, the presentiment of death and loss, and the passing of love and life. It is high metaphysical verse rooted in personal suffering and rapture. Rossetti certainly was not attracted by philosophical systems, but still he works with far-reaching ideas. Art and beauty, song and youth and age, sin and hope, he handles, not too abstractly, but with fidelity to the conditions of poetical expression. Such themes are more conspicuous in the second section, 'Change and Faith.' The first, 'Youth and Change,' has less of the impersonal element, and a kind of plan may be traced in it, or rather a procession of the three figures Love, Death, and Hope. Love at first triumphs, so that Hope is at first needless. Later, Hope is clouded with the fear and foretaste of Death, who at last seizes the beloved. This series, though, is interrupted by many digressions. At the end of 'Change and Fate' the same three figures loom again, and Hope remains dubious and 'illusive' as to the fate of Love after Death has intervened.

Many of the other sonnets are made to be inscribed under existing pictures, and therefore presuppose them, selecting of course the features that best admit of being put into language. In *Mary Magdalene at the Door of Simon the Pharisee* the faces, the festal throng, and the symbols are almost disregarded, and a single gesture is translated into a dialogue between the

Magdalene and the lover whom she is leaving for Christ. *Mary's Girlhood* answers to the early painting *Ancilla Domini*. The sestet describes the picture, the octave the character of the Virgin ; but the angel disappears. *La Bella Mano* is a rhapsody on the hand, and hardly refers to the painting at all. *Fiammetta* and *Astarte Syriaca* attempt a wording of the design, as if for the benefit of a blind man, though the result is hardly distinct. But in *The Card-Dealer*, which is not a sonnet, the emphasis on the 'swift light-shadowings,' or *reflets*, of the jewels, is pictorial enough.

But Rossetti's sonnets are happier when he is not fettered by a picture at all. In those on Blake and other poets, a noble intention is always present, if not always borne out ; and, in general, the poet's danger in sonneteering is to write like this :

> What netherworld gulf-whispers doth she hear,
> In answering echoes from what planisphere ?

We can turn from this to *Spring*, which may or may not be meant to remind us, but which does remind us, of Keats, and which well bears the comparison ; it is an English water-colour of the best school :

> The young rooks cheep 'mid the thick caw o' the old :
> And near unpeopled stream-sides, on the ground,
> By her spring-cry the moorhen's nest is found,
> Where the drained flood-lands flaunt their marigold.

Rossetti has left too little landscape in his verse, and much of what there is, though beautiful, is not there for its own sake ; it is subordinate and symbolic, as in *Down Stream*, composed at Kelmscott on the Thames, or as in *The Stream's Secret*.

V

He published only seven ballads, or ballad-lays ; but along with Morris and Swinburne he is the chief renovator of these forms. He practises both the plain popular style which comes down from the folk-ballad through Scott, and the 'condensed and hinted style, dear to imaginative minds,' which comes down from *Christabel*. Neglecting the dates of composition, we can arrange these poems in a scale, starting with the simpler ones. *Stratton Water*, like Morris's *Welland River*, copies the traditional ballad, and catches well enough its iterative way of building up a story. The spirit, too, is congenial to the popular muse.

There is a race against time ; the lady is wedded just in time to legitimate her babe, and the jack-priest hauls himself along to perform the christening. In the stanzas that were added later some literary diction intrudes ; what would the folk-poet have said to 'death's blind head' or to the 'weltering slope'? That kind of writing was natural to Rossetti, and good in its place. To simplicity and *naïveté* he also attains, but only by visible prayer and fasting.

The language of *The White Ship* is not always plain, and the butcher Berold talks sometimes like himself and sometimes like Rossetti. This is in the ballad-style, and it suits Berold well :

> A few friends leaped with him, standing near.
> 'Row ! the sea 's smooth and the night is clear ! '
>
> 'What ! none to be saved but these and I ? '
> 'Row, row as you 'd live ! All these must die ! '

This is the lettered style :

> Out of the churn of the choking ship,
> Which the gulf grapples and the waves strip,
> They struck with the strained oars' flash and dip.

But neither of these, again, represents the staple manner which serves for the level parts of the story. For that Rossetti uses the language of the *lay* as it had been employed by Scott and Byron, and uses it with a difference. It is a good medium, and he contrives skilfully to harmonise the simpler and the more figured styles. *The King's Tragedy* is less simple than *The White Ship*, and the speaker, Catherine Barlass, has a better right to be imaginative than Berold. The poem gets some of its romantic charm from the clipped verses that are inserted by the poet, with needless excuses for the clipping, from *The Kingis Quair*. The subject is of the clean heroic or tragical sort, and gives him the chance of using his naked strength. Miss Rossetti wrote to him, 'I wish you would write more on such subjects ; surely they are well worth celebrating, and they leave no sting behind.'

Not the 'sting,' perhaps, of *Sister Helen* or of *Eden Bower*. *Sister Helen* was termed by Miss Rossetti 'that terse fierce masterpiece.' And if it is not a masterpiece, the reason can only be its length. The extreme compression, the will to cap one climax with another, somewhat deadens the effect, which nevertheless is formidable enough. Several devices of the folk-ballad are adapted and woven together : the recurring and varying burden, and the interposed short lines ('Little brother,' 'Sister Helen') which recall those in 'Edward, Edward,' are

the voice of the imaginary audience following the mood of each stanza. They catch the sense of her ironical replies quicker than the little brother can do, and whisper horrified prayers or echoes after each of them. The aim of the whole is to use the supernatural as at once the means and the symbol of a spiritual tragedy. Sister Helen will not shorten by her forgiveness, which alone will permit him to be shriven, the ban she has cast on her deceiver; his torture shall last as long as the melting wax, and her soul shall perish along with his. She is content with

> nothing short of seeing him in the flames of hell,—willing herself to suffer in them the torment that is only less than her thirst for revenge (Gordon Hake).

The poem unfolds its moral drift slowly and obscurely; the author put in the first verse ('Why did you melt your waxen man?') to help the reader, but thought the work a 'not unfair' exercise for his 'ingenuity of comprehension.'

Eden Bower certainly 'leaves a sting behind.' Rossetti seems to have invented the legend he attaches to Lilith, the wife of Adam, who tempts the snake to let her personate him as the Tempter of her dispossessor Eve. The strength of the poem is undeniable, but it is too much that of the poetical contortionist; the diction suffocates itself, and the horrors recall those of the old school of fiction, the 'romances of terror.' In *Troy Town*, there is not the same constraint; the words could not be shorter or plainer, and there is a delicate classical ease unusual in Rossetti. There is no symbolism, or heroism, or exorcism, and no spiritual bearing—the purpose is just the plastic expression of pure beauty, the beauty of the cup moulded upon the breast of Helen.

The youthful romance, *The Staff and Scrip*, has the breathlessness and the note of awe which are also found in *The Blessed Damozel* and *My Sister's Sleep*. It is a typical 'Pre-Raphaelite' poem in its simplicity and also because it falls naturally into four pictures, or panels, representing the meeting, the arming, the vigil, and the return. The spirit is truly that of old romance, and much of the effect is won by the magical shortened line concluding every verse—a favourite device also of Christina Rossetti's:

> Her women, standing two and two,
> In silence combed the fleece.
> The Pilgrim said, 'Peace be with you,
> Lady'; and bent his knees.
> She answered, 'Peace.'

The much longer *Bride's Prelude* has not this mediæval stamp. It is a study of a concealed shame that is gradually confessed, and the attention comes to be fixed less on the bride herself than on the pure listening sister, Amelotte. Rossetti drew out a plan for its completion, which was never executed and would have been difficult enough.

Rose Mary stands furthest of all from the popular ballad. Yet, like *Sister Helen*, if in another way, it embodies a complex and lofty application of a piece of folklore, into which the conceptions of sin and punishment, of penance and forgiveness, are woven. The actual tale appears to be invented, and also the condition that the watcher of the beryl-vision must be innocent if she is to see aright. Because of her sin with the knight, the spirits mislead Rose Mary as to the road on which his foes are posted. He takes the wrong road, meets his death, and is punished not only for his fault with Rose Mary, but because he has also been unfaithful to her with the sister of his sworn enemy, now his slayer. He was riding to get his shrift and Rose Mary's too, but he thus misses it, and is damned. Of his second crime she does not know, but shatters the beryl and dies before finding it out. She is taken to God and forgiven, and forgets in heaven even the name of her knight. *Rose Mary* is the freest, the most rapid, and the loveliest in colouring and music of all Rossetti's narratives, and perhaps of all such tales in English. Some lines in it might be owned by the greatest poets :

> A light there was in her steadfast eyes,—
> The fire of mortal tears and sighs
> That pity and love immortalize.

The words and tune in *Rose Mary* seem to come together of themselves, instead of being painfully thought out. The beryl-songs of the spirits are the only drawback, but they can be severed from the rest without loss.

VI

The dramatic monologue had been worthily written already by Tennyson and Browning. This difficult form implies a story, or situation, which has to be made clear by a single speaker. If Hamlet's five soliloquies were taken out and put together with a little lacework for connexion, they would form a perfect dramatic monologue. Rossetti attempts this species twice. Browning says that his *Men and Women* are ' utterances of so

many imaginary persons, not mine.' The imaginary speaker in *Jenny*, described as a 'young and thoughtful man of the world,' is a free-living, rather cynical, but good-hearted Londoner, who has no illusions as to what may be passing in the girl's mind. Also the poet in him sees these sorry things as part of the universal pathos of 'Jenny's case.' He is sometimes also a little vulgar, let us hope without the poet's complicity. British convention had avoided Jenny's calling as a theme for art, and the temptation, which Rossetti escapes, was therefore to sentimentalise it. Instead, he wrote a profound poem. At first he planned it without the framework of incident, but he was right, ten times over, to insert that. In *Jenny* he gets clean away from his romancing, away from his private oratory and high love-ritual, where the censer swings so incessantly and heavily, to the life of the world. Like Blake, of whom the poem often reminds us, he beats a novel and piercing music out of the old short-rhymed measure :

> The London sparrows far and nigh
> Clamour together suddenly ;
> And Jenny's cage-bird grown awake
> Here in their song his part must take,
> Because here too the day doth break.

So, in his picture *Found*, with its accompanying (and much inferior) sonnet, the subject is that of any melodrama, but the treatment is everything ; the countryman finds his old village love crouching in extremity under London Bridge.

A Last Confession, while it may be thought of as a tribute to Browning and his method, is truly to be called a 'Pre-Raphaelite' poem, in so far as the speech is often reduced to the plainest terms ; and moreover the effect turns on the recurrence of a significant emblem, or rather of two such ; the knife, namely, which does the murder, and the laugh of the faithless girl which haunts the speaker and drives him to his deed. The tradition of simplicity, a little conscious by this time, had come down from Wordsworth through such poetry as Tennyson's *Dora* :

> With that, God took my mother's voice and spoke,
> And sights and sounds came back and things long since,
> And all my childhood found me on the hills ;
> And so I took her with me.

Rossetti's blank verse is not so original as his other metres. His invention of lyrical tunes of the subtle, slow-moving, and meditative kind is of a high order ; and most of his lyrics do

move slowly, being crowded and even overcharged with matter —mental bullion. The 'fundamental brainwork' which he prescribed for himself is apt to get in the way of pure singing. His friend Swinburne had to contend with this obstacle much less.

Even when his stuff is of the frailest, Rossetti can always point to a definite argument. His inspiration is not of the divine and involuntary sort that Socrates describes to the youthful Ion; but he admits no flaw in his design. *The Stream's Secret* and *Love's Nocturn* are his most studious experiments in the pattern-work of feeling. The stream is at once the lover's sphinx-like confidant and also a symbol of the progress of love. It will not tell him when, or whether, love's hour shall come to him again, as in imagination he figures it coming. Love stands at the well-head, and sends the enigmatic message down-stream; and 'love's hour' is further imaged as watching its own shadow nearing it upon a dial. Only the hour of parting is certain. But shall there ever be a meeting first? The whispering answer of the water is doubtful. This grave liquid-sounding poem shows with what intensity Rossetti can present, and almost personify, such conceptions. *Love's Nocturn* is simpler in idea, but is frequently more strained, and more 'precious,' in its wording than *The Stream's Secret*. Its scene is the land of dreams, which are mutual messengers of the prayers and hopes of love; a rarefied region, but in it Rossetti moves, for once, with an aerial lightness that reminds us of Shelley:

> Like a vapour wan and mute,
> Like a flame, so let it pass;
> One low sigh across her lute,
> One dull breath against her glass;
> And to my sad soul, alas!
> One salute
> Cold as when death's foot shall pass.

Few of Rossetti's lyrics approach to this pure essence, or exhalation, of song. *The Song of the Bower* and *Love-Lily* (especially the former with its Morris-like cadence) have the heavy sweetness, as of lily or orchid, which besets so much of the writing and painting of this group of friends; it either delights or cloys, there is no choice between. But songs they really are. At the other pole is a piece like *Soothsay*, a gnomic utterance and a confession of faith, a thing said in verse and said well, but not sung. Between come *Song and Music* and *Even So*, where speech is just passing into song, and poems of

mystical communing like *The Sea-Limits* and *The Cloud Confines*, where the purely lyric element is fading out. '*Consider* the sea's listless chime'; the very first word is barely lyrical. Yet Rossetti seldom writes a verse that can disregarded, and his artistic conscience is everywhere.

VII

His poetic language is full of idiosyncrasy. He often uses scriptural phrase, though far less habitually than Swinburne; and never, like Swinburne, does he turn it against itself in an anti-clerical spirit; but returns to it simply to express exalted moral wrath or denunciation. But he likes to elaborate it, so that it loses some of its simplicity. This practice is to be seen in *Dante at Verona*, in the sonnet *On Refusal of Aid*, and in *Retro me, Sathana*:

> Leave these weak feet to tread in narrow ways.
> Thou still, upon the broad vine-shelter'd path,
> Mayst wait the turning of the phials of wrath
> For certain years, for certain months and days.

But Rossetti prefers above all to experiment with the Latin element in our vocabulary. Like Milton and Dryden, though in a different fashion, he inlays learned polysyllables in his line, and usually towards its close. Some are rare words, if not coinages, such as *firmamental*, *circumfluence*, *culminant*, *immemorable*; or they are familiar words which get a novel colouring, such as in 'hours *eventual*,' or 'spring's perfect *imminent* hour,' or 'the sighing wind's *auxiliary*.' And many words but half-poetical in themselves are warranted by the turn that is given to them, as in *The Monochord*:

> Nay, is it Life or Death, thus thunder-crown'd,
> That 'mid the tide of all emergency
> Now notes my separate wave. . . . ?

In more than one way these practices lend to Rossetti's cadence its peculiar character, which at times amounts to a mannerism. The line often ends with a long word followed by a full-vowelled monosyllable, as in

> Sleepless with cold commemorative eyes,

or in

> Sun-coloured to the imperishable core.

Often, again, the last syllable is unemphatic, lines ending with *inveteracy*, *irretrievably*, *intolerable*; and sometimes two such endings rhyme together, which seems excessive.

In another of his favourite usages Rossetti follows Keats, who followed the Jacobeans. This is in the invention of pictorial or musical double compounds. Many of his combinations are of great beauty, and though he sows them rather thick, he does not go beyond the genius of the language in framing them. Such are *wind-warm*, *field-silence*, *osier-odoured*, *soul-winnowing*, *woodflowers bashful-eyed*. In the first eight lines of *Spring* there are six of them : *soft-littered*, *wakeful-eyed*, *lambing-fold*, *stream-sides*, *spring-cry*, *flood-lands* ; nothing there, surely, to be ungrateful for ! and the effect of these dissyllables upon the rhythm, producing many ' spondees,' and thus of course slowing down the line, is again characteristic.

In this connexion may be noticed Rossetti's fondness—shared by Morris and Swinburne, and a minor badge of the school—for the ' hovering,' or rather artificially strengthened, accent, falling upon the rhyming syllable ; a practice which is only too easy to imitate, but is delightful in skilled hands. Here are three out of many varieties :

(1) or whose brief sun-glimpsès
Scarce shed the heaped snow through the naked trees.

(2) Stoop through the spray of some sweet life-fountaìn [rhyme with ' plain'].

(3) Those worn tired brows it hath the keeping ðf [rhyme with ' dove '].

Rossetti is like a French or Italian poet in the stress that he lays on his rhymes, and in his search for new rhymes. His practice in this matter is deliberately licentious, not careless. He takes the risks of extending the capricious liberties of English rhyming ; and though he justifies them by the charm of the effect, it is as well that his novelties have not become established. We find such combinations as *eve*, *contemplative* ; *hell*, *abominable* ; *drown'd*, *beyond* ; *room*, *home*, *some* ; *once*, *sons*, *zones* ; *growth*, *drouth*. In ten out of the twenty-four verses of *The Blessed Damozel* there are unorthodox rhymes, and this after two revisions of the poem. The result is often consonance and not strict vowel-rhyme at all. A craftsman like Rossetti can go these lengths. The firm riveting of the rhymes in *Jenny*, with the peculiar modulations of stress accompanying them, turns a facile metre into a slow and stern one, and gives the poem half of its effect :

Even till the early Sunday light,
When Saturday night is market-night
Everywhere, be it dry or wet,
And márket-níght in the Háymárkèt.

Rossetti's early mastery of these devices can be studied to

advantage in *The Burden of Nineveh*. And in *Chimes* ('Hollow heaven and the hurricane') he shows his delight in echo and sound-weaving and his consciousness of his own skill.

Some of this procedure, no doubt, is easy to parody; and, in general, Rossetti's peril is that of drifting into a peculiar poetic manner, or dialect; or, to be plain, into a jargon, the result of giving too hard a turn of the screw to language. Much of his verse, even on solemn occasions, is encrusted in this way, especially in his sonnets. And even where he stands far above the reproach of such a word as jargon, he is still habitually strange. It is strangeness in beauty, no doubt, but strangeness still, as if the quality were involved in his very idea of verbal felicity. Some have thought that the cause may be his Italian upbringing. On such a point an Englishman can scarcely judge; but I fail to see anything markedly Italian in Rossetti's idiom; his translations from that language, like *The Leaf*, do not show it; nor is it evident in the song, which is written in both languages, in *A Last Confession*. Another reason, at any rate, may be hinted.

Poets of Rossetti's studious tribe have always much cold-blooded technical work to get done; work as definite, and requiring as steady a hand, as that of a goldsmith, or of the Indian who inlays marble flower-petals into the marble tomb of an emperor. They rejoice in the sorting of coloured words, in bevelling the sentences, in blowing away the dust. It is the joy of decoration, which insensibly carries them away from natural forms into strangeness. And when they succeed they are not only happy but *amused*, at any rate in the French sense of the word. Virgil surely, and Tennyson, were thus amused at their own deftness. This feeling they study to hide from the reader (*ars celare artem*), but in vain; and amusement is part of the reader's pleasure too. And such poetry does not leave him silent, which is the right effect of poetry, but makes him cry *bravo!* But the simple, that is the genuine, reader, feels that this effect is not all he wants; so that by instinct he turns to great, simple, and primary poetry, where the technique, though just as perfect, does not seem to be preoccupied with itself; and he feels it to be not strange at all, but infinitely familiar—a thing he had always known, and known in just such words. Technique, in Homer or in *Othello*, is everywhere, but it is a minister, and does not obtrude; nothing is odd, and there is none of the pleasure given by oddness. So, of Desdemona's hand, we hear that

> It yet hath felt no age nor known no sorrow.

That, and not *La Bella Mano*,

> In maiden-minded converse delicately
> Evermore white and soft,

is the real thing! So much must be said; yet it is said without prejudice to Rossetti's true and frequent command of simplicity bought at whatever cost, and of exalted impassioned strength. Much of *Jenny* has this character; and much of *Dante at Verona* has it, in another style, nor is it ever far away. The strangeness is present too, but Rossetti is at his highest when it is hardly perceptible, in spite of the invariable compression of language which he practises, and which makes for strangeness. When he is rapid and simple, he conquers. There are few lovelier stanzas in the language than this from *Rose Mary*:

> The fountain no more glittered free;
> The fruit hung dead on the leafless tree;
> The flame of the lamp had ceased to flare;
> And the crystal casket shattered there
> Was emptied now of its cloud of air.

And, in quite another manner, he is capable of attaining to the simple and profound, as in the famous line in *The Monochord*:

> Oh! what is this that knows the road I came?

Or he produces a like effect in the more familiar and piercing style, as in *A Last Confession*, where plainness of diction is enforced by the character of the speaker, who seldom talks like Rossetti.

VIII

All Rossetti's prose is of interest, including his dashed-off letters; as in his verse, he abhors the inexpressive, and condenses to the utmost. He has only left one piece of inventive prose, the little romance *Hand and Soul*. It reads like one of his own translations from the Italian, or like something in Browning's *Men and Women*, with its disguise of circumstantial history, its imaginary painter and imaginary German inquirer. Chiaro dell' Erma watches from his window the factions fighting in the entry below; he sees their blood spilling over his careful frescoes on the wall. He thinks his art a failure. But he then dialogues with his own soul, who appears to him in the guise of a woman, 'clad to the hands and feet with a green and grey raiment.' She reproaches and consoles him, much as Browning might have done, for his despondency. 'Why shouldst thou rise up and tell God He is not content?' 'Set thine hand and

thy soul to serve man with God.' This is Rossetti's youthful faith, reflected in his verse and painting of that period. But *Hand and Soul* also marks a date in the history of what came to be called, by the enemy, æstheticism; a phenomenon easy to recognise, easier to travesty, but hard to define. Perhaps Leigh Hunt, with his pretty prison-furniture, and his genuine cult of beauty, and his habit of fingering his own sensibilities, was the first true 'æsthete'; it is known how the weaker of these elements passed into Keats, to be absorbed and effaced in the loftier one. There are phrases in *Hand and Soul* which might hardly surprise us if they came from Hunt, or from Pater. 'He would feel faint in sunsets and at the sight of stately persons.' 'The warmth of the air was not shaken; but there seemed a pulse in the light, and a living freshness, like rain.' 'He was weak with yearning, like one who gazes upon a path of stars.' There are signs of this sort of sickliness in the youthful prose stories of Morris; but it is essentially adolescent, and both writers soon leave it behind them.

Rossetti did not write much criticism, but what he does write is never insipid, and is, unlike most criticism, difficult to forget. His preface to his own translations from Italian and his review of Gordon Hake's poetry are good examples of his style. His 'supplementary chapter' and notes included in Gilchrist's *Life of Blake* (1863) exhibit it more at length. Rossetti's actual editing of that poet did more harm than good. He systematically trimmed and altered the text, in what he judged to be Blake's interest. In thus tidying Blake's lyrics, Rossetti only sinned with other editors; and the true text was not established until 1905. But he wrote worthily about Blake, both as poet and painter. As masters of both arts, the two are almost solitary companions amongst artists of English upbringing; and Rossetti's account of Blake's technique is full of poetic insight:

> In Blake's colouring of landscape, a subtle and exquisite reality forms quite as strong an element as does ideal grandeur; whether we find him dealing with the pastoral sweetness of drinking cattle at a stream, their hides and fleeces all glorified by sunset with magic rainbow hues; or revealing to us, in a flash of creative genius, some parted sky or beaten sea full of portentous expectation.

Rossetti's more spontaneous prose can be seen in his familiar letters, or in his remarks on the 'stealthy school of criticism.' It is terse, positive, and highly efficient, especially in the sardonic passages. He has a vein of hard-hitting banter and of

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fairly brutal sense, which sets off his transcendental and ideal side picturesquely. Satire of a genial order is seen in his picture of Dr. Johnson at the Mitre addressing the two pretty quakers from the country. There is a good deal in Rossetti of this sound eighteenth-century vein, which is little represented in his poetry.

IX

Christina Georgina Rossetti [1] (1830-94), the only mistress in our language of sacred verse, is also one of the safest artists among the English poets. The Christian piety and ecstasy which inform some of her brother's writing through inherited sympathy, speak in her with the voice of a real and passionate worshipper. She was of the 'high' Anglo-Catholic persuasion, like George Herbert and other seventeenth-century forerunners; of whom, as of Tennyson and Mrs. Browning, there are passing echoes in her work. But Miss Rossetti depends on nobody, not even on her brother, strong as his influence was on those around him; at rare moments they have a note in common. Her fountain of language is the Bible, more especially the lyrical, and of these the more sombre, portions: the prophets and *Ecclesiastes*. The more buoyant strain of the Apocalypse and the *Song of Songs* is loudly heard sometimes. Her melancholy and austerity were inborn, and were increased by a certain tyrannical quality in her conscience. Under her quietness, her cordiality, and her childlike freakish fun and fantasy, we are allowed to see a nature hard as basalt. These qualities are all seen in her published letters. It is idle to regret her strength of character, or the suffering that it brought her, or her restrictions of interest, for they all nourish her gift. The religious life with its self-imposed discipline, the family life with its few and impregnable affections—these were not all; for within them she led the life of art, and used her art to express her religion and her affections.

In her poetic labours, at any rate, Miss Rossetti may be called most fortunate. Her power appeared early; the song 'When I am dead, my dearest,' dates from her eighteenth year. Her last writings show no abatement of musical perfection. All her poetry, and we may add her prose, is a perfect mirror; we seem to look through and not at the glass; no distorting cracks or dimnesses, no unreal coloured fringe. Much of her experience is painful; but she does not, like most sufferers, labour it into a misguided form that doubles the painfulness. Nor does she fall into the automatic writing, equally without

flaw and without permanence, that swells the volumes of Swinburne or of Victor Hugo. What she wrote was born of the spirit on each occasion, and her way of work seems to have been highly spontaneous. The fruits are not an unwieldy load: over nine hundred English (and some sixty Italian) poems, mostly brief, some very brief, and never long. In her lifetime appeared *Goblin Market and other Poems* (1862), *The Prince's Progress and other Poems* (1866), *Sing-Song* (1872), *A Pageant and other Poems* (1881); and, after her death, some *New Poems* (1896). Her religious prose (*Annus Domini*, *Called to be Saints*, *Time Flies*, etc.) has also to be named. *Time Flies: a Reading Diary* (1883), which offers a poem, a brief saint's life, an apologue, or a homely devout fancy, with plentiful humorous strokes, for every day in the year, well intimates the range of her temper and imagination. Her poetry sorts itself out into three divisions. First, there is a body of lighter, more fantastic and ingenious matter. The second mass, the largest, is the utterance of Miss Rossetti's innermost religious life. Thirdly, there are poems secular in topic, but nevertheless grave, and prevailingly pathetic or impassioned. The forms that she favoured are the narrative, the sonnet, and the lyric; the last including a great diversity of tunes and measures, ranging from the briefest, simplest, and tiniest up to the splendid and stately monorhymes of 'Passing Away' and 'Marvel of Marvels.'

X

Among the poems of fantasy, narrative and other, *Goblin Market* is the most considerable. It is a fairy tale, with the latent note of mischief, cruelty, and pain that belongs to so many good fairy tales. It is pure invention, and not of the popular stock. Like *The Ancient Mariner*, it has no moral, and there is no reason in it. The conclusion, 'There is no friend like a sister,' is no more the real burden than 'He prayeth best who loveth best' is of Coleridge's tale. But it *plays* with spiritual ideas, in such a way as to get home; with the ideas of temptation, entrapment by evil, and sacrifice and rescue. Still it stops short of symbol. It is fierce, and yet deliberately and delightfully infantine, or young-girlish. The pleasures and pains of childish appetite, of tasting wonderful fruits, and being smeared with their juices, and resisting the longing to taste, are riotously described. One sister, Laura, does taste; and the law of the fruit is that whosoever sucks it once shall madly crave a second enjoyment, yet shall be

denied that hope and shall pine to death. The game of the goblins is to deny the chance of a second taste ; they are wicked, though in Dante Rossetti's drawing they are only quaint and sly and rather kindly. Lizzie, the other sister, tricks the goblins, risking the penalty, and Laura is saved after a bitter experience ; that is all. The slackening and rushing, the surging and dying brief cadences of the poem are triumphantly managed ; they grow out of the emotion and never seem to be thrust upon it. *Goblin Market* is a small masterpiece, and has no fellow.

The Prince's Progress is another glamour-story, a long lyrical ballad, more of Coleridge's than of Wordsworth's kind, liker still to one of the relentless mediæval anecdotes in *The Earthly Paradise*, likest of all in its tune to *Rose Mary*, but not really like anything. It began out of the closing dirge, and was built backwards from it ; at the instance, it is said, of Dante Rossetti. For once the brother and sister, poetically speaking, touch hands ; the actual three rhyme-words here italicised also occur together in *The Staff and Scrip* :

> Veiled figures carrying *her*
> Sweep by yet make no *stir* ;
> There is a smell of spice and *myrrh*,
> A bride-chant burdened with one name ;
> The bride-song rises steadier
> Than the torches' flame.

The Prince tarries too long in sundry pleasances and Alcina-gardens, and finds the long-waiting bride dead. It is an exemplary tale ' made imaginative, rather than an allegory. It begins in a colloquial childish tone, which dies away slowly through the chiming echoing effects that are beloved and mastered by the poetess :

> Come, gone—gone for ever—
> Gone as an unreturning river—
> Gone as to death the merriest liver—
> Gone as the year at the dying fall—
> To-morrow, to-day, yesterday, never—
> Gone once for all.

Miss Rossetti's verses written for the young and for the very young speak to readers of any age. One of her most carefully arranged pieces, *The Months : a Pageant* (1879) is in a changing, sometimes wailing, lyric recitative ; the little gestures and stage directions enjoined are all in keeping. *Sing-Song, a Nursery Rhyme-Book*, consists of some two hundred snatches, a number of which are also given in Italian, and they touch

at one extreme the genuine stock of authorless and traditional infant ditties, while at the other they belong, like many of Stevenson's, to the kind which the adult is sure that the child would enjoy :

Before the coming of the night
The moon shows papery white ;
Before the dawning of the day
She fades away.

All this smaller and sprightly verse, down to the family skits, valentines, and *bouts-rimés* which are included, and the exercise in which made not a little for ease and rightness of handiwork, bubble up from the surface of a spirit rich in playfulness and in feminine but usually stingless wit. The variety of the rhymes is to be heeded, and also the preferences shown for double rhymes, for inner or echo-rhymes, and for that ending of a stanza with a sudden shorter line, which gives a freshening effect of surprise :

Cornflowers give their almond smell
While she brushes by,
And a lark sings from the sky,
' All is well.'

Soon we come to watch for these turns, where the poetess is seen to stop and look up at her hearer. They are found equally in the devotional poems ; and, among these, especially in the refrain-pieces; something between triolet and roundel, and in the carols :

A night was near, a day was near ;
Between a day and night
I heard sweet voices calling clear,
Calling me :
I heard a whirr of wing on wing,
But could not see the sight ;
I long to see the birds that sing,
I long to see.

There is no real break between Christina Rossetti's gayer and her graver writings. The carols are a link between them. It is a hard thing, and attained by few, to be infantine, homely, and devout, and also to keep within the bounds of literature ; but she does attain it. She is, in fact, a mistress of the familiar style that does not sink.

In the bleak mid-winter
A stable-place sufficed
For the Lord God Almighty
Jesus Christ.

That reminds us of a speculation, in one of her prose works, on

the place in heaven that might have been earned by anyone who, on that night, should have turned out of his bed for Mary the Virgin, and lent it to her :—mediæval, that ! Now and then, though not often enough, there is a pleasant oddness, as in the lines *Young Death* :

> Lo in the room, the upper,
> She shall sit down to supper,
> New-bathed from head to feet
> And on Christ gazing :
> Her mouth kept clean and sweet
> Shall laugh and sing, God praising.

The lighter tones or gaieties of the inner life as conceived by such a votary no doubt have their roots in the ultimate hopefulness and good cheer implied in her faith. These underlie the thick layers of self-distrust, of self-chastising rigour, that come between : ' I am weighed upon,' she writes once, ' by the responsibility of all one does or does not do.' These moods are the penance of her beautiful spirit, but also the source of its power. Her religious verse is on the whole overcast ; it is an exhalation from her habitual actual experience ; it is the utterance of conscience, fear, and trembling, with rarer notes of ecstasy, as in *The Heart Knoweth its own Bitterness*. But the conscience is also that of an artist ; less, we may think, of an artist who continually files and discards and mends, than one who watches for her happy moments, is jealous for her spontaneities, and treasures them and the words they bring just as she does the moments of holy feeling that they express.

XI

The greater part of Miss Rossetti's poetry is religious. Some of it is made, in the manner of *The Christian Year*, for a series of pious occasions (*Some Feasts and Fasts*) ; a plan that is always a strain upon the composer. Even here the crystalline tones are not apt to fail. But most of this mass of lyrical or meditative verse is impossible to classify by the occasion, or indeed on any principle, unless it be by that of the metre, with which the theme and temper are in continual accord. The sonnets, which are mostly given over, as sonnets should be, to thinking aloud rather than to singing, have always a deft Italian precision, and they have further the last and rarest virtue of a sonnet ; they sound natural. The strict scheme of metre, and the corresponding articulation of the theme, always rule, but do not thrust themselves forward ; and the effect is

that of self-questionings and self-answerings that have dreamed themselves into rhyme. Some regularity of greyness, some want of salience may certainly be noticed, though not complained of. We move on a high table-land of language and feeling, in which a sonnet like that on the faith of Cardinal Newman stands out as an eminence. Swinburne's lines on the same writer are parted from Miss Rossetti's by the whole diameter of faith : the oppositions of feeling within this age, within this very group, could not be sharplier exhibited :

> Now fixed and finished thine eternal plan,
> Thy best has done its best, thy worst its worst :
> Thy best its best, please God, thy best its best.

The Christian, Anglo-Catholic poetess matches, but only by contrast, the 'singer before sunrise,' who, addressing Carlyle as well as Newman, ends with 'Time's word and man's' :

> 'Go honoured hence, go home,
> Night's childless children ; here your hour is done ;
> Pass with the stars, and leave us with the sun.'

In this context, though they are poems of the earthly not the heavenly love, are to be named the fourteen sonnets entitled *Monna Innominata*. We are told on authority that they refer to the writer's own love and suffering, and they fall thus by the side of some other lyrics similar in occasion. Miss Rossetti, it appears, was twice forbidden by fate and religious scruple to marry out of her own fold. She was thus thrown back upon the consolations of faith, and sought them with a deflected and enhanced intensity of passion ; putting, as we have said, her conscience as earnestly upon the discipline of singing quite rightly as into the observances, inner and outer, of her creed. These sonnets record, under a very light disguise, the experience of a 'lady unnamed,' presented as an imaginary type, 'sharing her lover's poetic aptitude,' and speaking 'for herself.'

Had the Great Poetess of our own day and nation been unhappy instead of happy, her circumstances would have invited her to bequeath to us, in lieu of the 'Portuguese Sonnets,' an inimitable 'donna innominata,' drawn not from fancy but from feeling, and worthy to occupy a niche beside Beatrice and Laura.

Set beside the *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, these poems, with their mottoes from Dante and Petrarch, which their own loftiness, finish, and piercing tones do not belie, surely regain by their artistic purity and *vox angelica* what they may lose,

by the hard necessity of the case, in radiance and warmth. The last of them, 'Youth gone, and beauty gone,' closes on a tone of pure melancholy, unqualified by the religious resignation or by the expression of nobly overstrained self-sacrifice that rule in those just preceding it. The longer sequence, *Later Life*, does not fall behind in performance, and utters the consolation, denied in life, which the Christian finds in death.

This dominant or recurrent mood was not all due to disappointment, but was clearly inborn. Some of Miss Rossetti's more youthful verse, even in *The Germ*, betrays the direct influence of the Preacher, and its sincerity is all too plain :

> I said of laughter : it is vain.
> Of mirth I said : what profits it ?

At other times there is the ring, doubtless owing to coincidence, of the gloomier anonymous lyrics of the fifteenth century. When she cries

> All weareth, all wasteth,
> All flitteth, all hasteth,
> All of flesh and time,

it is not unlike

> The life of this world
> Is rulèd with wind,
> Weeping, dārkness, and steriinge [pangs].
> With wind we blomen,
> With wind we lassen ;
> With weeping we comen,
> With weeping we passen.

More often the curious tracking down of a thought, or scruple, or image, even to the point of quaintness, recalls the tradition of Anglican poetry in George Herbert or Henry Vaughan. Miss Rossetti does not deny herself 'metaphysical' touches, and perhaps is conscious of the practice, though she is kept by sheer artistry from the dangers of coldness and 'conceits' on the one hand, and, on the other, from the pitfall of the ecstatic-erotic-religious, which needs a peculiar temper and talent to make it other than disgusting.

> Hope chants a funeral hymn most sweet and clear,
> And seems *true chanticleer*
> *Of resurrection* and of all things dear
> In the oncoming endless year.

But these are exceptional sallies, and for the most part she is simply herself, unswayed by any of the religious poets of her

own century, Keble or Heber, any of whom, or perhaps all together, she excels in endowment.

XII

Reading her continuously, it is plain that there is a recurrence of certain fixed leading themes, amongst which her brother, William Rossetti, noted 'death,' 'aspiration for rest,' 'vanity of vanities,' the effect being not indeed monotony, but a distinct uniformity. Monotony she escapes by her astonishing resource and assurance in the choice and use of lyric forms, as well as by the certainty that she writes because she must, and never because she ought. And the 'forms' are not merely the measures, but the varying key of language, and pitch of feeling, that each measure carries with it as its own. Dante's *terza rima* occurs not infrequently, for somewhat longer-drawn-out meditations, and in one case (*By the Waters of Babylon*), for an outbreak, a kind of paraphrase of the psalm, that is for once almost declamatory. The longer-rolling anapæstic metres have a Swinburnian correctness and sonority; the briefer ones have now and then the dissolved pathos that Poe contrives to implant in his :

> Pure gold is the bed of that River
> (The gold of that land is the best)
> Where for ever and ever and ever
> It flows on at rest.
>
> Oh goodly the banks of that River,
> Oh goodly the fruits that they bear,
> Where for ever and ever and ever
> It flows and is fair.

One majestic and stately form, the monorhymed poem, is known everywhere by a sublime example : 'Passing away, saith the World, passing away.' Women, so far, have written sublime verse even more rarely than men. The accumulated tolling of the reiterated rhyme is also found in 'Marvel of marvels, if I myself shall behold,' in 'Hope is the counterpoise of fear,' and in some other cases. This is one of the most solemn tunes in the language, but few dare essay it. The rhymes must seem self-sown and pre-appointed, not a tax on the dictionary. There is a similar dignity in the triple-rhyme stanzas of *All Thy works Praise Thee, O Lord*, a 'processional of creation.' Yet it may be after all in the numberless shorter snatches that the writer's spirit is most clearly uttered, and the master-mood of two-thirds of her musings is heard in one

short flight of six lines ; where the chiming upon the rhyme-word is also most distinctive :

> Heaven is not far, tho' far the sky
> Overarching earth and main.
> It takes not long to live and die,
> Die, revive, and rise again.
> Not long : how long ? Oh long re-echoing song !
> O Lord, how long ?

' Give me the lowest place,' and ' Bury Hope out of sight,' and that rapid and passionate descant, *The Heart Knoweth its own Bitterness*, may be chosen out of the poems more expressly devout or exalted, as being at once most intimate confessions and consummate lyrics. But any real or exhaustive comment must be in the shape either of anthology or of technical analysis.

The secular short songs and poems select themselves more easily, and some of the most famed, it may be remembered, date from the writer's eighteenth or nineteenth year : not only ' When I am dead,' but also ' Summer is gone with all its roses,' and *An End*, and *Dream Land*. *Autumn* and *May* are later, but only by less than ten years ; the dirge, ' Why were you born when the snow was falling ? ' belongs to 1865 ; and Miss Rossetti's latest lines, ' Sleeping at last,' to about 1893. She was thus able to write lyric free from flaw very soon, and also to the last. There are two or three pieces equally good but of different and unexpected complexion, suggesting an idle regret that she did not oftener escape out of the deep and fixed channels of her thought. The poetry of the joy of life could not often be hers, but it breaks out for once in *A Birthday* (' My heart is like a singing bird '), and insuppressibly. The *lyra heroica* was equally out of her habit, but not beyond her power. The twenty lines of the poem *In the Round Tower at Jhansi* tell the story, believed when first heard, but afterwards not confirmed, of Skene and his wife in the Mutiny ; and they leave nothing to be said. Once, too, in 1870-1, Miss Rossetti, though usually immersed in art and the spiritual life, hymned France : a point of contact, rare enough, with the author of *A Song of Italy* and *The Litany of Nations*. The closing words waited long for an answer :

> A time there is for change and chance :
> Who next shall drink the trembling cup,
> Wring out its dregs and suck them up
> After France ?

CHAPTER XVI

WILLIAM MORRIS

I

More than most authors, William Morris [1] (1834-96), seems to have written for pure pleasure. Socrates, once more, would have found him tougher than Ion to persuade ; for he believed less in the fitful inspiration of the dæmon than in joyous and assiduous craftsmanship. The pen was a favourite tool of his, which he took up, like his other tools, for a change, not distinguishing between work and play ; and of which he was not quickly tired. He revised little either in verse or prose, but rewrote lavishly, and left behind him much drafted and unprinted matter ; but the examples of it given to the world cast little new light upon his talent. It must be said that he pays for his facility and abundance, like most of our poets who have been thus endowed, but unlike his master Chaucer, who is ever fresh and ever salient. Much of what Morris produced is of so even a tenor, and so much like the rest in the fashion of its beauty, that we could judge fairly of his gifts upon a half of its writing were it properly selected. Were a number of his poems, or prose romances, or carpets, or tapestries, to be wholly lost, we should be so much the poorer, but we should know him nearly as well as we do. Yet who shall quarrel with one who was so liberal of handiwork that is without a fault ? And if some of his pattern repeats itself, the whole fabric is still full of variety, even to the point of a seeming confusion, which only begins to clear when the whole history of the weaving is reviewed in the light of the artist's final ideals.

A life so versatile might be thought to be wanting in unity. But the poems of Morris, his prose fictions, his discourses on art and socialism, his lecturing and agitation, his industries of staining and printing, all minister at last to one aim and one conception, which comes out in course of time. Morris never wrote out the greatest of his dreams and romances, of which *A Dream of John Ball* and *News from Nowhere* are but chapters. He is the sanest of all the English writers who have imagined

an ideal state of things. Unlike Godwin and most of the political economists, he thinks of the future guild of mankind in terms of beauty. Like all prophets, he simplifies without mercy, but he does not become absurd or inhuman in doing so. His new earth is not an abstraction, Shelley, a great metaphysical poet, flies through an upper air unknown to Morris, but he never sees the population of his reformed earth with any distinctness; in that region, as in the Christian heaven, very little happens. In the Nowhere of Morris human passions are unexpelled, and though still imperfect are normally unspoilt. People move about, and make love, and make sport. There is, indeed, no place for a *comédie humaine*, for the law, polity, and institutions that such a comedy implies are pared away to the little that is merely needful: it is a kind of happy, almost peaceful, gently State-fathered community, with every one active and good-looking, or at least pleasant-looking, and every one much alike, and, if possible, possessed of inventive talent like William Morris. Happiness is not staked upon posthumous fears or hopes. Beautiful dress, dwellings, and appliances are at once the product and the school of such a society. The old heroic and romantic stories may be recited in the evenings, though their tragical events belong to a life that has almost gone by. Not quite; for griefs and pains are still felt, but felt as natural processes; jealousy and anger must be reckoned with at times, and the old pagan virtues may still be wanted. Still, 'individuality as a condition of well-being' tends to disappear. The landscape is of the unspoilt English order; the system that defiled it with smoke and slavery has disappeared too. Such is Utopia; and the scene and temper of the 'wondrous isles' or of *Child Christopher*, though confessedly fairyland, have a good deal in common with it. Here too beauty is paramount; the knights and ladies belong to the race of the future. The 'socialism' of Morris, deplored as a waste of time by artistic friends, is only an effort, childlike in some of its methods, but sound in its instinct, to clear the way in one corner of a blind world for the beginnings of a better order. Nor is Morris's enthusiasm for the Northern stories and their personages irrelevant to these ideas. It is true that his most sustained and perfect writing, down to *Sigurd* inclusive, embodies them, indeed, only gradually, or in glimpses, and sometimes not at all. Yet they mark stages in his journey towards his dream. His works are bound together, as we look back on them, by an underlying process of soul and imagination, which ends in 'something like prophetic strain'; and the light of

the prophecy is reflected back, no doubt with ever-increasing faintness, on his earlier productions.

II

He first emerges at Oxford, as one of the mediævalising 'brotherhood,' in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* (1856). The young poets and painters, who will be seen in retrospect as founders and rebels, do not yet so figure even in their own eyes. They are not secluded, or wrapped up in one another, and they are nearer to the main tide of letters than might be thought. They have no visible programme, except the wish to pick out and praise the best imaginative writing of the time. Carlyle and Ruskin receive ample honours. 'Then this man John Ruskin rose, seeming to us like a Luther of the arts.' Macaulay's *History*, now appearing, is disparaged for its rhetoric and for ignoring 'all the higher part' of human nature. There are reviews [1] of Alexander Smith and Sydney Dobell; perhaps in Morris's poems of 1858 there are some remnants of the excesses of that school. Tennyson is admired deeply; *Maud* had just appeared, and was a favourite with the circle, though hardly with the public. The strained and impassioned concentration of language, the mastery of the right words for abnormal, or abnormally intense, emotion, were not lost on the author of *King Arthur's Tomb*, any more than the skill which in 'almost every new passage' of *The Lady of Shalott* 'paints a new picture.' Morris himself reviews Browning's *Men and Women*, artlessly and cordially, and fixes on the dominant thoughts and situations of the several poems rather than on their workmanship; but he adds soundly enough that

> as to that which they call obscurity, it results from depth of thought, and greatness of subject, on the poet's part, and on his readers' part, from their shallower brains and more bounded knowledge.

Browning's love for bitter intricate situation, and for swift ellipse of language, is traceable in *The Defence of Guenevere*, just as his management, and also Tennyson's, of the dramatic monologue, is traceable in Rossetti's *Last Confession*. The *Magazine* further contains *The Blessed Damozel*, altered since *The Germ*; a first version of *The Burden of Nineveh*; and *The Staff and Scrip*. And there are five poems by Morris, four of which recur in the volume of 1858 and include *The Chapel in Lyones*, and some dozen prose tales [2] and studies, mostly not reprinted in his lifetime. Among these is the notice of

Rethel's *Death the Avenger* and *Death the Friend*; and also *The Churches of North France*, the most eloquent proof of Morris's insight into Gothic. He had originally meant to be an architect, and next, impelled by Rossetti, wished to be a painter. Now and for good, he became a poet and a romancer, and also a designer, decorator, and craftsman. Afterwards Morris was to find an ideal centre for all these activities in his work as a social reformer and prophet.

In this earlier verse and prose there is plenty of the strangeness and the arresting acrid savour which Morris, no one knows why, was soon so nearly to lose. The verse is far more of an achievement—though he afterwards thought it callow—than the prose; the unripeness is of a different kind, and is less easy to sacrifice, and forms part of its excellence. The prose of *Gertha's Lovers*, *Golden Wings*, and *Svend and his Brethren*, is much more in one style—though each tale has its own design—than are the poems of 1858. They forecast his later habit of prose, with its often wearisome beauty and sweet monotony—qualities intertangled with and even infecting the more obvious virile ones. There is plenty of fighting and killing, and the blows are described with Homeric or saga-like detail; but they are as yet exchanged in a startling silence, nor do we care which of those ghostly knights lives or dies:

> But passionless each bore him in that fight,

like the warriors that sprang from the teeth sown by Jason. As ever, the story, the landscape, and the decoration hold us, if the personages do not. There is also the element of the *macabre*, as in *Lindenborg Pool*, where an innocent priest is tricked into committing a dreadful blasphemy; and there are affinities here, conscious or otherwise, with Maturin or with Poe.

The volume of 1858, called after its opening poem *The Defence of Guenevere*, was at first cherished by a group of admirers, and is now seen to have opened a new poetic era, like Tennyson's book of 1842, or the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798. The characters are not indistinct like those in the prose stories. They enjoy, suffer, and die, and we are willing enough to 'suspend our disbelief' in their existence. Guenevere and Jehane are of the passionate family of Sir Philip Sidney's Gynecia, portrayed in the *Arcadia*; Sir Peter Harpdon and other personages taken out of Froissart are yet more solid. And though the poems come from one workshop, there is no sameness in them; the designs and colours do not recur. Unlike the tales in *The Earthly Paradise*, each one of them is almost

a species apart. The style varies ; sometimes it is level and musical, lovely and temperate, as it is to be in most of Morris's poetry afterwards ; more often it is condensed, full of abrupt transitions and broken melodies which express tragical frustration or despair or defiance. Morris is rough not so much through inexperience as because his subjects call for discords. In *The Defence of Guenevere* the original soft opening, which is preserved, was luckily given up for the harsher one. These verses, said William Bell Scott,

> represent the mediæval spirit in a new way ; not by a sentimental nineteenth century medium ; but they give a poetical sense of a barbaric age strongly and sharply real.

In one lyrical ballad, *The Haystack in the Floods*, the verse marches with a savage self-control, there is a hard edge to every sentence, and the scene of bloodshed is fixed in the mind's eye less by its own violence than by the central moveless image of the haystack, to which every emotion is, as it were, referred. At the other extreme are the tunes of *Rapunzel*, *Golden Wings*, *The Blue Closet*, and other poems, which are all as different from one another as are Browning's lyrics in his *Bells and Pomegranates*. Some of their metres remained favourites with Morris. The movement, though not the actual measure, of ' Speak but one word to me over the corn ' is repeated in 1885, in *The Message of the March Wind*. These tender dactyls or anapæsts served him for some of his most homefelt poems. Altogether *The Defence of Guenevere* is a creative book. It scarcely reveals, however, the lines on which the temper and art of Morris were to develop. Some have deplored the change, and those who care most for edge in poetry are likely to deplore it, though poets grow as they must and not as critics might have approved.

Yet, not to go too fast, is the breach indeed so complete between 1858 and 1867, when *The Life and Death of Jason* appeared ? The fragments, now published, of an unfinished narrative, *Scenes from the Fall of Troy*,[1] which was done in the interval, begin to show the transition. Nor does the strain of bitter energy ever wholly quit the poetry of Morris, though the roughness of form recurs less and less. In *The Writing on the Image*, in *The Proud King*, in some of the speeches of Medea, in parts of *Sigurd*, and of the *House of the Wolfings*, and in one or two of the later lyrics, that strain is clear enough, and refreshing too ; answering, when it does come, to the natural warrior temper of the man and even to his recorded rages and explosions.

III

The Life and Death of Jason was to have figured in *The Earthly Paradise*, but unfolded itself into seventeen books and became too large for the purpose. It is a new variety of the heroic poem. It uses some of the classical machinery, but not too much. There is the list of heroes, adapted from Apollonius Rhodius ;[1] and the invocation, addressed, however, to Chaucer and not to the Muses or Urania ; and there are sundry inserted episodes, not wandering too far afield, and tales within the tale. Otherwise the classical-Miltonic structure is avoided, and so is the wearisome old centipede progression of the alliterative *Morte Arthurs* and *Alexanders*. *Jason* is built more like the *Knight's Tale*, in so far as it is a straightforward long story, in which the interest of love does not overpower that of arms and adventure, but is still strong enough to exclude the poem from the true mediæval epics, to which *Beowulf* and the *Chanson de Roland* belong. Neither in Chaucer nor in Morris is the subject perfectly epical. The history of Palamon and Arcite, which attracted so many poets, is not wholly weather-tight, with its *furia ex machina* solving an impossible situation. That of *Jason* is ampler and nobler ; still it is broken up. The vengeance of Medea, coming ten years after her triumph, is a sequel or afterthought, almost like the dragon-slaying in *Beowulf*. Morris took the legend as he found it, but seems at the end to be whipping up his energies perforce, for the passionate parts. He prepares, certainly, for this break in the action by prophecies and presentiments ; the fatefulness of the quest, the Greek distrust of prosperity, are intimated throughout. And the tale unrolls at a gentle, uniform, not languid pace, like a piece of motley ribbon, to a foreseen end ; and its enveloping mood, one part heroic to three parts melancholy, never alters, and is the same as that of the narrators in *The Earthly Paradise*. To unpick some edges of the hanging and trace the classical sources or suggestions in *Jason*, or in *Atalanta's Race*, is well enough, if it makes us feel how Morris subdued all such borrowings to his atmosphere and purpose. He never wrote better, in this even style, than in *Jason* ; there is an alternation of brilliant and softer markings, which are never vague or muddy in colouring, and are fully harmonised. Sometimes a sharper image detaches itself from the delightful, rather forgettable, moving show, and fixes itself on our sense, as it did on that of Jason as he escaped from Colchis :

> But nought he saw
> Except the night-wind twitching the loose straw
> From half-unloaded keels, and nought he heard
> But the strange twittering of a caged green bird
> Within an Indian ship, and from the hill
> A distant baying; dead night lay so still,
> Somewhat they doubted; natheless forth they passed,
> And Argo's painted sides they reached at last.

Why do Chaucer's lines always stick in the brain, while his disciple's do so more rarely? Chaucer's lines wave where those of Morris ripple; his intellectual playfulness prevents too long a *rêverie*; he does not attempt a continuous illusion. Morris does attempt this, as Spenser does, and he succeeds, if at a noticeable cost; for there is some monotony. Yet Chaucer's blessing is asked and is bestowed upon *The Earthly Paradise* (1868-70). His shade is surely delighted at this new variety of his own kind of poem, namely, the framed panelwork, or call it the threaded garland, of narratives. The scope of *The Earthly Paradise* is almost as wide as Chaucer's; that is, if some of Chaucer's best things, his jests and fabliaux and portraits from the life, are left out. The poem is serious; such irony as we find in *The Proud King* is its nearest approach to humour. The mood is that of sad old men telling old stories to other sad old men. The Elders and the Wanderers are at the end of their course; youth and pleasure are beheld with a mixture of intensity and remoteness; but on the whole life is bittersweet. It is true that the wanderings of Psyche and Bellerophon finish well, and that if good things pass, so also may evil things; like the misfortunes of Laurence related in *The Ring Given to Venus*, where the troubled seer Palumbus lies duly at rest with his image on his tomb;

> And o'er his clasped hands and his head
> Thereafter many a mass was said.

On the other hand, the scholar in the old monkish anecdote, *The Writing on the Image*, told to relieve or point a sermon, perishes grimly; yet his fate only stirs a passing breath of pity; the man is mouldering, and the teller too will soon be a name of long ago. In the lyrics and opening apology the poet echoes this strain, with a more present intensity. These passages are renowned, and are among the most beautiful things he did. The mood is deeply felt and honest, but he is bound by it, and he just holds out to the end, with a certain weariness, which is communicated to the reader, in spite of the contrasts that are so well managed between the stories themselves. The person-

ages are mostly faint in drawing, except for their clothes ; and their colours are the glittering ones of mosaic, or of tapestry figures ; we do not mind when they die ; or rather they cannot die, since they never lived. This we feel even with Gudrun and Bolli, as Morris treats them ; the reality of the historical original is gone ; but we do not resent that, since it is no part of the design to preserve it.

The wandering Norsemen and Celts account duly for their presence to their hosts, the derelict Grecian colonists, and their *Prologue* is better told than any of the twenty-four stories ; it moves faster, and is more deeply realised. The plan that is thus made feasible, of alternating subjects [1] of classic and lucid outline with others of more fantastic or terrible cast, is unborrowed ; Alcestis coming next to *The Lady of the Land*, and Rhodope to Gudrun. The so-called Mandeville, and the *Gesta Romanorum*, and Norse legend, and *The Arabian Nights*, give some of the material for the latter class. Still the poet is weighted ; the brain and ear are left, after ten months of sojourn in the Paradise, hungering for a change and for something stronger. In the two stories of Bellerophon, this impatience begins to be satisfied. The scale, as critics have noted, now changes from that of the long romance to that of the brief epic. The temper and style are modified also. ' I naturally, and without effort,' said Morris, ' shrink from rhetoric.' But sometimes the verse seems to catch the strain, if not of Dryden, of Keats's *Lamia*, which is known to be in debt to Dryden :

> The eager heart shrank back, the cold was moved,
> Wooed was the wooer, the lover was beloved.

There is more life in these two tales than in their predecessors, and the tirades of Sthenobœa are almost human ; and there is the same strain in *The Ring Given to Venus*, which is inserted between the two episodes of Bellerophon. The octosyllabics have a new energy, and the language freshens with them :

> He met the fish-wife coming down
> From her red cottage to the strand,
> The fisher-children hand in hand
> Over some wonder washed ashore ;
> The old man muttering words of lore
> About the wind that was to be ;
> And soon the white sails specked the sea.
> And fisher-keel on fisher-keel
> The furrowed sand again did feel,
> And round them many a barefoot maid
> The burden on her shoulders laid,
> While unto rest the fishers went,
> And grumbling songs from rough throats sent.

Some pages of *The Earthly Paradise* have the true mediæval touch of *ennui*, which is only too appropriate to the ancient speakers. But the easy-flowing fountain of pure language carries everything through. The style, like Spenser's, is never common or unpoetical, whatever else may be said against it. Sometimes, as in *The Proud King*, the talk has the pleasant, archaising, quasi-Chaucerian ring of the future prose romances. The bright inexhaustible pageant of things seen is a perpetual relief. Morris, as yet, prefers the southern English country, without mountain storms or terrors; lowlands rich in water and leafage; tilled and reclaimed nature, where some of the beauty is the work of man and is filled with his happy energies; the merchant ship in the oily waters of the roadstead, the white cliffs, and the coast seas—he can always escape into the ocean; and the midland waters, like the well-beloved Windrush or Evenlode:

> This little stream whose hamlets scarce have names,
> This far-off, lonely mother of the Thames.

He has not yet seen Iceland. And he is Homeric at any rate in his love of dress, armour, trappings, and gay and coloured handiwork. There is abundance of such matter in *The Earthly Paradise*, and in *Sigurd* a new fund of it was to be discovered. These contributory pleasures never fail.

In 1873 came *Love is Enough; or, the Freeing of Pharamond: a Morality*. The tale itself, which is invented and has no literary source, might be one of the mediæval ones told by the Wanderers, yet is unlike anything else that Morris wrote. The quasi-dramatic construction of this poem is unique, beautiful, and amusing. The theme of happy love, remembered, present, anticipated, or lost, has a fourfold echo. Joan and Giles, discoursing in sweet and short rhymes, watch the Emperor and Empress, a kind of Theseus and Hippolyta who are wiling away their wedding-feast, and who speak in heroic couplets. They all watch the show, or 'Morality'—which is not a Morality but more of a masque—that is offered to them by the Mayor, and is performed by the citizens, not quite as at Athens. The actors of Pharamond and Azalais are lovers out of as well as in the play. Each scene is closed by 'the Music,' accompanying the heavily-charged and slow-moving lyrics, whose burden, 'Love is enough,' is in rocking rhymed stanzas. The dialogues of the play itself, those of Pharamond with his friend Oliver and his lady Azalais, and also the Mayor's speeches, are in a modification of the alliterative line[1] of

Chaucer's day, which is usually smoothed out into a four-beat anapæstic. Its sweet, faint cadence, unfortified by rhyme, suits the visionary indistinctness of Pharamond's musing and motives ; the thought and rhythm almost dissolve. All passes like a pageant in a crystal, and we are left the half-regretful spectators or sharers of the dream. Love, who appears as the presenter of the scenes, clad as a king, image-maker, and the like, delivers himself in decasyllabic couplets and in the familiar tones of the *Paradise*. But there are glimpses of another mood ; for towards the end Love proclaims himself the spring of good and soldierly deeds in a dreadful world ; and his banner will be there on ' Armageddon's plain ' ; a sign that even here, in the most shadowy and self-absorbed of his writings, Morris is moving towards his vision of a world-war which shall overwhelm the present evil order. He was afterwards to reconcile in a deeper way the call of love and the call to warfare in *The Message of the March Wind*.

IV

Whilst writing *The Earthly Paradise*, Morris began to improve his acquaintance with the ' matter of Iceland,' known to him already through the translations of Dasent, Head, and others. Late in 1868 he started to learn the language, and devoured the prose classics as quickly as Logi, or Fire, ate the food in the trough, to the wonder of Thor. He soon began, in partnership with his teacher, Eiríkr Magnússon, to issue translations, the first being the long saga of Grettir. Meanwhile he wrought the great *Laxdaela Saga* into the popular *Lovers of Gudrun*, for *The Earthly Paradise*. It is a history that is better packed into a ballad, as the late Miss Barmby showed in her noble *Bolli and Gudrun*,[1] than unfolded into a long romance. A detailed comparison with the original [2] shows how much nerve is lost, and how the characterisation is weakened, in the process. The saga deals in a vicious close cut-and-thrust of dialogue ; Morris loosens this, and sentences become speeches, and the words do not draw blood, although the incidents are respected and passages versified bodily. In recompense, there is always his diffused beauty of treatment, and much lovely ornamentation. In the *Paradise* he also inserted the briefer *Fostering of Aslaug*, a delightful folk-tale. He finished translating another of the classic sagas, *Eyrbyggja*, but did not print it for many years. In 1870 he issued *Volsunga Saga*, with ten pieces from the verse *Edda* rendered in something like their own alliterative measure. He

now began to use, for these purposes, the peculiar fount of prose diction which appears in his later versions and romances.

Two visits paid to Iceland,[1] in 1871 and 1873, coloured Morris's art and temper permanently. His journals remain, the first of them drawn up from notes after his return, and they show how pure and unarchaic his English was when left to itself. The hues of the lava, the forms of the basalt, sank into him, and they were always to be at his command. He records them sensitively :

> It was the strangest place this lava, all tossed up into hills and fantastically twisted ridges, greyer than grey, for it is altogether covered with that grey moss I have spoken of before ; it was indeed ' clinkers ' of the monstrous furnace, no less . . . we came into a long narrow valley of grass shut in on the other side by a green slope, and on our side by the heaped-up mass of grey mossy lava, quite strait and regular like a wall, but jagged and broken at its summit.

The lines on *Iceland First Seen*, some passages [2] of prose and verse quoted by Morris's biographer, and others given in his letters, must be read to see what the aspect of Iceland and its historic places—the place of parliament, the homesteads and islands and rivers of the tragic sagas—did for his genius. His earlier lines *To the Muse of the North* have the old, indefinite wail, which is not specially Northern at all. But now the ' religion of the North,' or what he took to be such, laid hold of him : the vision of the strife and ending of all things, to be followed, after the old Gods have passed into the twilight, by a new scheme, the thought of which makes men of us even now, so that we live ' not altogether deedless ' ; and so meanwhile—

> Think of the joy we have in praising great men, and how we turn their stories over and over, and fashion their lives for our joy : and this also we ourselves may give to the world. This seems to me pretty much the religion of the Northmen. ' I think one could be a happy man if one could hold it, in spite of the wild dreams and dreadful imaginings that hung about it here and there.

The same spirit appears darkly in *Sigurd*, and connects itself with the political strivings and aspirations that Morris was afterwards to elaborate. It does not exactly reproduce the tone of the sagas, for the pagan doomsday was not keenly present to the actors in the great stories. Morris read into the sagas something of his own ; but his creed is worth a great deal in itself, and he came to find adequate words for it ; it does not spoil his poetry, or remain, as so often happens, an ill-expressed lump of doctrine perplexing the writer's art. Yet we would

not have missed the earlier plaint of the 'idle singer,' with its piercing quality. Here may be noted, anticipating dates, Morris's other labours as a presenter of Icelandic literature.

He went on translating sagas with Magnússon. *Three Northern Love-Stories*, those of Frithiof, Gunnlaug, and Viglund, appeared in 1875. He had already tossed off rhymed versions, often very loose, of excellent Danish ballads like *Knight Aagen and Maiden Else*. Late in 1875 he began *Sigurd*, finished it in a year, and published it in 1877. Long afterwards, in 1891-5, he produced the 'Saga Library,' which included *The Story of the Ere-Dwellers* (*Eyrbyggja Saga*), and *The Stories of the Kings of Norway*, translated from the *Heimskringla*. And in his earlier prose romances, *The House of the Wolfings* (1889) and *The Roots of the Mountains* (1890), the scenery of the sagas, however vaguely localised, as well as their spirit, is apparent. Altogether the spell of Iceland, along with that of Chaucer, was the most potent that Morris ever felt. It coloured his mental landscape and his ideals; gave him the matter for his greatest poem; shaped a good deal of his diction; and led him to translate some of the best of the prose epics: a gift to English readers which is by no means yet outworn, and which entitles him, as a helpmate of genius, to his place near the scholars and pioneers, like Gudbrandr Vigfusson and Sophus Bugge, who were basing the edifice of Northern studies.

In *Sigurd the Volsung and the Fall of the Niblungs* he swung far enough away from the delicate Chinese-box construction of *Love is Enough*, and from its vanishing shades of feeling. In his ears meanwhile had been the heroic march of the *Æneid*, of which his translation (1876) has vigour and movement, but is not very accurate or very Virgilian. Did he feel that Chapman's long lines of fourteen syllables, which he used for this purpose, were wanting in undulation, however magnificent in onset? For *Sigurd* he hit on a measure that supplied the want. As to mechanism, it is a rhymed anapæstic couplet of six beats, with a spare syllable after the central pause; so that though spondees or iambs or monosyllabic feet may come at other points, there is always at least one salmon-leap in the line, thus:

> And fresh and all abundant abode the deeds of day;

while usually there are three or four such leaps, and the verse runs along rapidly until it is checked by the sounding rhyme. The languors of *The Earthly Paradise* have gone. A typical piece of description will show the pace and changeful brilliance of the metre, which is kept going through thousands of verses:

Forth go their hearts before them to the blast of the strenuous horn,
Where the level sun comes dancing down the oaks in the early morn:
There they strain and strive for the quarry, when the wind hath fallen dead
In the odorous dusk of the pine-wood, and the noon is high o'erhead:
There oft with horns triumphant their rout by the lone tree turns,
When over the bison's lea-land the last of sunset burns;
Or by night and cloud all eager with shaft on string they fare,
When the wind from the elk-mead setteth, or the wood-boar's tangled lair:
For the wood is their barn and their store-house, and their bower and feasting-hall,
And many an one of their warriors in the woodland war shall fall.

One risk of this way of writing is a cantering facility; the lines are not engraven like hexameters. Another is a clot of consonants, or a run of pebbly British monosyllables. Morris does not always elude these risks, but he had found the form that could carry him, with colours flying, through his long chronicle of blood-feud and of tragic conflict that is only soluble through a doom which is early divined.

The outline came from the *Volsunga Saga* which he had translated. The thirteenth-century compiler had pieced the traditions together rather dryly, but not without energy and concision, and knew some, but apparently not all, of those older poems on the subject which are still extant, as well as some verse and prose which is now lost. Morris uses his authority with less respect than he had shown to the *Laxdaela Saga*; uses him often, in fact, much as the mediæval poets used 'Dictys the Cretan' or 'Dares' for their Troy-poems. He keeps the lines of the story, weaving in traits and speeches as he will, and also bits of the verse *Edda*; adds all the colour and landscape; and makes eloquent and explicit and copious the passion that is buried, or mummified, under the curt phrases of the original.

His temper is now a noble sort of fatalism, which knows that disaster and internecine war may well follow hard upon victory and the joy of life and the pledging of troth. In the Volsung story, as he tells it, this end is half-foreseen by the actors. They feel that they are fighting against their fate, and their fate rehearses that of the world, or of this world, which ends with the Twilight of the Gods. The melancholy and courage of such a temper are nobly fathomed and uttered by Morris; but it is not his last word. One day 'the new sun beams on Baldur'; nor do the Norns shape the end regardless of human effort; they 'order all,'

But the day when the fair earth blossoms, and the sun is bright above,
Of the daring deeds is it fashioned and the eager heart of love.

But in *Sigurd* the ground-tone is the sense of doom. These interludes of triumph and happiness are fewer as the poem goes

on. The threads are knotted into a hopeless tragic tangle, and the knot is cut by the internecine work of the four chief actors and of those who belong to them. The story is really a drama in epical clothing, but there are some elements, not to be torn away, which deprive it of dramatic perfection.

Goethe,[1] reading the history of Hamlet in Saxo Grammaticus, was tempted to put his hand to it, but stopped, not because Shakespeare had come first, but because 'the story, without being put vigorously through a purifying fire, could not be used.' It would be hard wholly to purge the story of Sigurd and Brynhild. The fire would first have to consume the initial episode relating the monstrous operation of Queen Grimhild, who gives the magic drink to Sigurd, so that he forgets awhile Brynhild to whom he is plighted. Under another of her spells, he woos Brynhild in the semblance of Grimhild's son Gunnar, successfully. He weds Gudrun, Grimhild's daughter, as Grimhild has planned. The spell passes, but the knot is tied, the truth is known, and calamities thicken. It may seem pedantry, once we are a land of talking dragons and omens and prophecies, to stick at a philtre of forgetfulness. But this is what drives the whole action forward, as even the curse of Fafnir, breathed upon the holders of his treasure, does not drive it; the *action* could do without that curse. It is as though Othello were beguiled not by Iago, but by a witch-broth; and then the scene would sink to the level of Fletcher's play *Thierry and Theodoret*, where some such devilry is used for another purpose. The Volsung legend, once it is under weigh, is one of the greatest ever invented; but it is still true that if we think the monstrous element away the story does not happen, while, if it remains, the story revolts the dramatic or poetic judgement at the outset. Morris, in fact, is not at ease with it, and finds the spells hard to manage. It matters less, though it is a pity, that he should load the action with the misfeatured cruel horrors of the overture, which relates the life and death of Sigurd's father Sigmund, and of his portentously-begotten son Sinfiotli. In that dark inhuman old tale, pre-Olympian in cast, there are poetic opportunities; but it might have come better as a separate lay. The saga to which Morris kept so close was itself a late composite thing, and this part of it might have been disregarded.

None the less, he rises to the central and crucial scenes as surely as he manages the connective and the pictorial matter. There is no monotony of treatment, nor does the verse or style abate, throughout the whole series of classic scenes: the

waking of Brynhild, her entrance among the Niblungs ; her betraying dialogue in the water with Gudrun ; her last refusal of Sigurd, her death, his death ; the death of the Niblungs in Atli's hall, with Gudrun on the high seat ; the slaying of Atli by Gudrun, and her slaying of herself. Here the poet wisely stopped, as the story of Swanhild opens a fresh chapter. The theme and atmosphere are more Æschylean than Homeric ; but there is something that can be called Homeric in the manner —in the speed and ring of the lines, in the unity of a diction that suits both homely and exalted matter, and above all in the relish with which external things, bright or fierce or lovely—battles, and conclaves, and wonders, and places, and costume, and nature—are delineated. The descriptions would have pleased Lessing, for they move like Homer's ; they grow upon the sight of the hero as he approaches hilltop or walled city ; they are seldom set pieces. All seems spontaneous ; yet the work was not dashed off. It is clear, from the parts of the first drafts that are now published, how freely Morris criticised himself. The bitter last words between Sigurd and Brynhild he at first made pathetic and reminiscent ; but, having relieved his mind of the pity of it, substituted the sterner and shorter version. He thought of *Sigurd* as standing higher than the rest of his work, and he was not wrong. He had reached his summit in verse, though afterwards he wrote other things, including his translation of the *Odyssey*, in the same metre and manner, and also a few of his best lyrics. Prose remained, but he was not for some time to use it for inventive art. His remaining original poetry may be mentioned now.

It is found scattered up and down his prose fictions, and also in *Poems by the Way* (1891), which includes also some early writing of various dates.[1] The romances contain epical snatches and lyrics, often of great beauty, if of a familiar stamp. In *Poems by the Way* there are many ballads or ballad-like narratives, such as the pleasant *Goldilocks and Goldilocks*, some 700 lines turned out in an afternoon to fill up the sheets. There are also verses for the 'cause,' some of them rhetorical and uncomfortable reading, but some, like the *Death-Song* in honour of the youth Linnell, with a truer pulse in them. Now and then Morris found a new thing to say, and a new modulation of an old form for it. *The Message of the March Wind*, *Mother and Son*, and *The Half of Life Gone*, form a kind of sequence. The lover speaking to his love, the mother to her baby, and the widower to his own heart, are all steeped in the happiness or regret of the hour, but all look to the day of 'deeds'—the key

word of the three lyrics—the day that calls a man to take his share in the battle for the bettering of the world. Here the public passion of the poet and his touch on intimate experience are blended, as never before; love and action together form, as of old, the complete man or woman. Nor is there any discord or preaching; the tones are harmonised like those of some deep water-colour. These three pieces belong to 1885, when Morris was in the thick of the fray, and are extracts from the noticeable tale in verse, recently reprinted, called *The Pilgrims of Hope*, which appeared during that year in *The Commonweal*. The portions which Morris himself refused to rescue are not such good poetry, but they are more than mere propagandist verse. They have the same kind of interest as political scenes in Kingsley's *Yeast*, and describe some of the things the poet saw or heard of in his attendance at endless 'meetings,' as he fared through London with his strange regiment of 'comrades.'

V

After *Sigurd* he published no more long poems except *The Pilgrims of Hope*, and his 'shaping spirit of imagination' rested until 1886, when *The Dream of John Ball* and *A King's Lesson* proved it to be more than convalescent; and the train of prose romances followed. Morris's copious, confused mass of other production [1] between 1878 and 1890 consists of lectures, discourses, notes, articles, and letters to the press; only the main threads of it can here be picked out. Of the arts and crafts he spoke and wrote incessantly to the last; and, from 1877 to 1883, of little else. His chief addresses are collected in *Hopes and Fears for Art* (1882). They range from the detail and principles of the decorative crafts, his own crafts, of dyeing, weaving, paper-staining, and the rest, to the ideals of art at large, and thence to the conditions of its renovation in Victorian England. There he finds, like Ruskin, ugliness omnipresent; the face of the land marred not only by smoke, by mean dwellings, and by cinder-heaps of cities, but, worst of all, by sham art: bastard Gothic deforming what Morris ever preached to be the noblest of all the arts and the most comprehensive; base mechanical decoration flooding the home, and dress and adornment equally perverted. He rings the changes on these denunciations with plain, unrhetorical persistence, and with no trace of the rudderless caprice and cantrips of his master, in a style that can be pleasantly brief

and blunt (he liked Cobbett and used a plain manner), but often rising into natural eloquence. 'Art made by the people for the people, as a joy for the maker and user'—he writes this text in capitals; a paper like 'The Beauty of Life' expounds the faith. He sets the gospel of work on a surer footing than Carlyle, to whom his debt is great, had ever done; for to Carlyle work is a grim duty, a law, not highly pleasureable; he knows that we are not here to be happy, and that it is a grand mistake to expect otherwise. To Morris labour implied the pleasure of inventing and executing. Those who had no such gift could at least enjoy and use the work accomplished by others. The fruits of his practice and preaching in this direction are part of our social history. His attitude is not that of a critic but of a maker, who imparts his own experience and its lessons. There is nothing esoteric about him. He cannot think of art as in a corner, severed from the people, any more than we think of a drama without an audience. Art and life to him are almost conterminous, but not at the expense of life. Herein he strikes wider than any of his group; for the excursions of Rossetti into the fates and affairs of the great world are rare, and he soon slips back again; while the democratic ardour of Swinburne, though sincere and lofty, and inspiring some of his rarer lyrics, is abstract, like Shelley's. It suggests at times the air-pumps rather than mountains. All of them, however, contrast well with the solemn absorption in pure 'art' of the later French romantics. Théophile Gautier and Baudelaire are sequestered; the movement of the human race does not exist for these writers.

The connexion between the artistic and the social strivings of Morris is best seen in the lecture he gave late in 1883 to the Russell Club in the hall of University College, Oxford, with Ruskin listening, and the Master of the College disclaiming sympathy with the Socialist campaign. I heard this discourse, called at the time *Art and Democracy*. Old Oxford shuddering, young Oxford admiring, but not quite following; the lecturer hammering his point, temper well in hand; the unearthly *vox angelica* of Ruskin, well audible; the Liberals disconcerted at a creed which cut at the roots of their 'bourgeois' tenets: it was an historic piece of comedy. The lecture is one of Morris's best, and clearest, and soberest. 'Art is man's expression of his joy in labour.' No such joy is possible under the 'competitive, or devil-take-the-hindmost, system,' which is but 'chattel slavery.' One day a new spirit will 'abolish all classes' and will 'substitute association for competition in all

that relates to the production and exchange of the means of life ' ; and this will ' give an opportunity for the new birth of art.' The superstition will end that ' commerce is an end in itself,' and the ' bourgeois commonweal ' will end too. We shall have a folk of delighted craftsmen, something like that of Chaucer's day, and perhaps working in similar guilds. Morris never explained much further ; his pictures of the cataclysm that must precede the change are vague, and can be read in *News from Nowhere*. For many years he was to proclaim these ideas, heroically careless of repetition, on platforms, at street corners, in endless pages of his periodicals *Justice* (1884) and *The Commonweal* (1885-90). In the volume entitled *Signs of Change* (1888) are gathered up the most finished of his lectures. They all have the same frank and noble quality of writing, the same eschewing of the Latin oratorical tradition and of all flourishes.

Much of what he wrote on these topics has blown down the wind ; but he twice discarded the form of lecture, speech, article, or pamphlet, for the more native one of a vision. In *News from Nowhere* (1891), which had come out in *The Commonweal*, there are lumps of pamphlet, and the lecturer, not much at his ease, takes up the parable. But the scenery and manners and crafts of the reformed society are vivid enough. Human nature is not to be wholly recast ; pain, perversity, and anger, persist, and blood may sometimes be shed. But the worst burdens which man in his blindness has laid up on his own back are abolished. The huge complex of law and polity that marked the centuries of capitalism is reduced to a mild minimum. A happy industrious democracy has simplified its own passions and institutions into a cheerful communism. Everything that Burke loved has gone by the board, and all the better. Morris did not care for philosophy, he picked what he liked out of history, he troubled nothing about figures, he heeded the modern literature of other countries very little. What he left out does not matter ; the curious bright half-reality of his figures has no false notes in it ; it was his business to dream, and his dreams are lovely and wholesome. *A Dream of John Ball* (1888), which had appeared in the same journal, is pure art ; the teaching comes into it naturally and dramatically. The picture of English landscape, fighting, costume, and turmoil in the age of Gower, is in perfect keeping. Morris sees, as in the overture to *The Earthly Paradise*, a purged England, a clean landscape ; and, little fettered by history, he portrays the peasant rising, which he sees as dimly symbolising the

righteous war of the future. Here, and in all the contentious writing of Morris, we seem to hear his words :

> I cannot choose but be moved to the soul by the troubles of the life of civilised man, and the hope that thrusts itself through them.

VI

In his other prose romances, which he poured out so easily from 1889 to the last, Morris never loses sight of this fundamental idea. In his fairyland he sees a community where the face of nature, at any rate, is not blemished by man's mistakes, while the soul of man is cleared of much self-imposed darkness and oppression. To the last his hand gains in delicacy and freshness, when portraying such an imagined world. If we bear hard on such fictions and ask for plot, or complexity in the characters, or dramatic situation, we are likely to maltreat them. They do not, as stories, challenge the same test as those in *The Earthly Paradise*. The difference is not simply that between verse and prose, or between derived and invented subjects. These tales belong to the ' lesser decorative arts ' ; in each of them, the whole can be judged from almost any part of it. They are *pattern*. The battles, love-scenes, glamour-passages recur ; that makes the charm. We look at them in their Kelmscott Press garb, rather than read them, as we look at a storied wall. We need not look at every square yard, or go on living with them. There is a wonderful keeping in their style ; the dyes are harmonious, original, and fast in grain. Moreover the succession of the patterns has its own story. The tales change in character. The process from *Jason* to *Sigurd* begins to be reversed. The romances begin in a saga-like and a more heroic manner, and end in a softer and more shimmering one. The comparative precision of time, place, and trappings in *The House of the Wolfings* contrasts with the dateless enchanted land of the last, unfinished story, *The Sundering Flood*. This recession from reality may be described as a movement from epic to romance.

In *The House of the Wolfings* the staple is prose, but it is freely interveined with verse (the verse of *Sigurd*), especially in the speeches, saga-fashion. It is a good fighting story, the most masculine of them all. The Romans, on some vague debateable Northern marches, are rolled back by the Wolfings. It is told with astonishing copious eagerness ; Morris was still active in his own fray ; it was only two years since ' Bloody Sunday,' which he had witnessed ; and he had not yet given

up his practical campaign for Socialism. In *The Roots of the Mountains* (1890) the fighting goes on, but there is more sorcery and strangeness, and more love-making, and less rhyming. The scene has become less definite. Little occurs except that the Dusky Folk are repulsed at last by the Burg Folk. The book is very long, and would seem longer but for the zest of the writing. In *The Story of the Glittering Plain* (1891) the scene is laid still farther off, in the 'land of the undying,' the Norse Elysium where men are re-made young and live for ever without the pains of mortality. *Child Christopher and Goldilind the Fair* (1895) is reminiscent of *Havelok the Dane*, and is a romance of the historic folk-lore type, with its princes disguised and in poor estate who come to their own. The picture of Goldilind bathing in the pool has a Nausicaa-like daintiness and charm; indeed, there are tints of the *Odyssey* in many of Morris's romances. In *The Wood Beyond the World* (1895) the country is sinister and enchanted, with beast-faced dwarves lurking in the undergrowth. Here, as elsewhere, the scheme is the old one of the knight and lady who are lost, or enslaved, or bewitched, and at last become king and queen. *The Well at the World's End* (1896) is the longest drawn-out, and, with all its beauties, the most boneless of the series; and not the least beautiful is the posthumously printed *Water of the Wondrous Isles*, telling of the maiden Birdalone, and the wicked Witch-Wife, and the kindly Wood-Mother Habundia. The fancy of Morris was hale and youthful to the last. His lavishness and sympathy, and a certain playfulness, in delineating fair persons and the dealings of lovers, do not fail. There is more subtlety in his portraits than is at first seen. He paints a type of beauty different from those celebrated by his friends. The page in which the Wood-Mother describes Birdalone to herself, feature by feature, is an example. Birdalone may well become the mother of men. The youths and maidens in *News from Nowhere* are of the same kind. The more there could really be of them, the better. They are tanned and natural, and they make love in the open air. They are friendly with real dogs and horses. There is nothing of the hysterical element which we mark in the first series of *Poems and Ballads*. The imagination of Morris is clean and frank, and he has his full artistic reward, nor does he lose in intensity. No one now echoes the turbid and foolish criticisms on the sonnets of Rossetti, which have a concentration and mental range that are foreign to Morris, and which are 'ennobled by the concurrence of the soul at all points.' Yet Rossetti's bower seems close with the vapours of

the censer, and we go back with relief to the ' wondrous isles.' In this story, too, there is a hint of disappointment and tragedy ; the figure of the deserted Atra conveys it. Morris's style, in these romances and in the last of them, *The Sundering Flood*, becomes more and more pliant to the calls made upon it, and runs along evenly and fairly like his own script. A word may be added here on the peculiar diction which Morris invented.

VII

The mediævalism of Morris had its negative, even aggressive side ; he turned away from the Renaissance as much as he could. He would have none of its architecture, and its polity was supposed by him to have fathered the modern commercial tyrannical system. If he cared for its poetry, it was not as an inspiration. He disliked Milton, the last and greatest artist whom it produced in England. In his own writing he may be said to have tried to forget it and go back behind it, and to show what could be done without it. He goes further in this direction than any modern English writer of note. The result is most evident in his language. Spenser, the chief artist of the English Renaissance before Milton, put together a diction of his own, triumphantly, and imposed it on the poets. Morris does not owe much to Spenser except the example of a success, which he rivalled in his own way, though the poets have not followed him so faithfully.

The vocabulary, syntax, and phraseology of his early verse, indeed of all his verse down to *Sigurd*, are seldom markedly archaic ; the exceptions are slight and superficial. The style is of *Jason* and *The Earthly Paradise*, mostly so pure and translucent that it is hard to describe it except by mentioning the traditions which it disregards. What Morris shuns, or rather escapes without trouble, is, first of all, the whole Elizabethan manner, using the word in the widest sense, from Wyatt to Milton—the manner that inspired Coleridge, and Keats, and Shelley, not a little ; and, secondly, the whole neo-classical manner, from Dryden to Byron. In other words, he was affected as little as a man could be by the dynasties of style that had ruled for three centuries. ' I cannot think,' he said, ' that I ever consciously aimed at any particular style.' Nothing can better show his initiative, nothing better justify his inattention than the results. True, he is touched awhile by Browning and perhaps by Keats. The picture of Colchis by night might not have been what it is without the one, or

King Arthur's Tomb what it is without the other. And they in turn are touched, more or less directly, by the Elizabethans. But what Morris takes from them, when he takes anything, is not what came from the Elizabethans ; it is what came from Chatterton and Coleridge, through the narrow but central stream of romantic poetry—the lay and the ballad with their coloured words and their glamour. He is really no man's follower ; but his verse is in the tradition of *Ælla*, *The Ancient Mariner*, *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, and not at all in that of *The Progress of Poesy*, or *Adonais*, or the songs of Beddoes. Even when he versified the Greek legends, he seized on the elements in them which he could treat in this romantic way, and he made more than the most of it. He must have liked the *Odyssey* for its gardens and sea-passages quite as much as for its fighting. But the classics at large, especially the Latin classics, in themselves, in their Renaissance offspring, and in their degenerate eighteenth-century posterity, counted for as little in his diction and temper as they well could at that age of the world. Herein he stands apart from his friends. The classical note is strong, the mediæval note is secondary, in Swinburne. Much of Rossetti's diction is Italianate—that is, Latin at one remove. Morris would sooner have used in his verse the word *hatter*, noticed by Robert Louis Stevenson as a reluctant one, than *instantaneous*, *penetrative*, or *insuperable*. He was right in shunning them, and we do not feel the sacrifice.

Amongst the many sorts of good poetic style there stand out two extremes, which are contrasted by the nature of their calls on the reader's attention. One is the packed and salient style, like Rossetti's, where every line gives a new shock and forces us to stop and take it in. Madox Brown's pictures are crowded with meaning detail, and use up every inch of space, in a similar way. Among poets Donne is another example ; but he gets his effects by abrupt turns and cusps in the thought ; Tennyson, again, does so by beautiful and curious treatment. The opposite order of style aims at carrying the mind forward rather than at arresting it. The poetry, in the jargon of the psychologist, is a *continuum* ; it excites an even flow of pleasure hardly rising into self-consciousness. Of this style Spenser, in the level parts which form so much of his writing, is the master ; but he stops for many set pictures or pageants. Morris affords a more perfect example ; that is, he does so in his usual *Earthly Paradise* manner ; for *Jason*, not to speak of the early poems, is decidedly more salient. The stream of Morris's narrative runs neither fast nor slow, without any falls or foam, without

Chaucer's minute sparkle and sudden freshets. It is full of soft colours ; in its bed the stones glisten. It is never loud, and never mute ; if it swells in sound and volume, it is soon level again. It never reaches the sea at all ; it stops somewhere, anywhere, and flows into the ground. Such poetry, it is often remarked, is hard to quote ; it leaves behind it the memory of a mood rather than of distinct words. It is the least fatiguing medium (short of the greatest, Homer's or Milton's) for a long story ; that is its advantage over the other, the more startling style, which could not keep up for very long without exhaustion. Spenser and Morris bribe us to go on ; surely, we say, one more hour will pass easily, like the last ? Where the subject and measure are more rousing, as they are in *Sigurd*, the temperature is higher, but still it is even. The same is true of Swinburne in *The Tale of Balen* ; and also of his plays ; but in drama, from the nature of the case, this sort of writing is clearly wrong.

In prose as in verse, Morris draws on the native English and simpler romance vocabulary, and uses short words rather than long. Such is his preference in song and story-telling, and even in lecture and argument. Chaucer and Malory, and the French and English romances, seem to have given him this bent. He latterly translated tales like *Amis and Amile*, and *The Emperor Coustans* ; they too are in the same bright, simple, unemphatic language. And though he formed his poetic style first, and his prose style afterwards, yet his prose, when it did begin, reacted upon the style of his verse. This reaction first appeared after *The Earthly Paradise* was finished.

Morris's fabricated prose style, which used to be ignorantly pounced on as mere sham-antique, came first to him through his translations from the Icelandic. There are doubtless traces of a voluntary simplicity in his college tales, such as *The Hollow Land* ; and even there the effect, though it is experimental (we find phrases, impossible to Morris later, like 'nervous anxiety' and 'prolonging indefinitely'), is beautiful. But the deliberate Teutonism begins with the effort to find a true, close equivalent in the tales of Grettir and the Volsungs.

Now on a time went Grimhild to Gunnar her son, and spake : 'Fair blooms the life and fortune of thee, but for one thing only, and namely whereas thou art unwedded ; go woo Brynhild ; good rede is this, and Sigurd will ride with thee.'

Gunnar answered, 'Fair is she certes, and I am fain enow to win her.'

This, or something like it, is natural in the original ; in English it has to be made natural. Morris, by writing reams of it, made it natural to himself, it cost him no more trouble than breathing ; and we can, by going with him, read ourselves into it easily enough. It is, however, too near Icelandic to be the best way of rendering Icelandic ; but its modification, perfected in *The House of the Wolfings* and its successors, is a real and delightful achievement. These words give us, after a little use and wont, no more trouble than *The Faerie Queene*. Morris worked hard, and at last got the tints right and harmonious, clearing out the kind of archaism that jars, just as Coleridge did in revising *The Ancient Mariner*. In *The House of the Wolfings* this process is not complete. It must be borne in mind that the antique fashion is always, and properly, more marked in speeches than in narrative :

'Hearken therefore as to the Hauberk : I wot well that it is for no light matter that thou wouldst have me bear thy gift, the wondrous hauberk, into battle ; I deem that some doom is wrapped up in it ; maybe that I shall fall before the foe if I wear it not ; and that if I wear it, somewhat may betide me which is unmeet to betide a warrior of the Wolfings.'

It reads like a translation, and a good translation. This was published in 1888. In the later romances such an impression fades. The peculiar language is everywhere, but it is only one coloured thread twisting and blending amongst the others :

I know that thou wouldest have me speak, therefore I say that I am come to bid thee farewell, since there was no farewell between us in the wilderness, and I know that thou art about going on a long and hard and perilous journey ; and I would that I could kiss thee and embrace thee, but I may not, for this is but the image of me as thou hast known me. Furthermore, as I loved thee when I saw thee first, for thy youth, and thy kindness, and thy fairness, and thy valiancy, so now I rejoice that all this shall endure in thee, as it surely shall.

Here Morris's cadence, as well as his language, has reached its final excellence. The abrupt movement of the saga-style has gone, and a roundness of rhythm has come ; this may be due to a study, of which there are many traces, of the Authorised Version. In *The Dream of John Ball*, and in the exalted parts of the lectures, the strain is at its purest. The admixture of the older speech ceases to be a trick or manner ; it is like a drop of intense colouring-matter in a flow of spring water.

CHAPTER XVII

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

I

THE paradox of Swinburne[1] is this, that while in all his volumes there is hardly a line which fails of its intended melody, we are from first to last alive to the fatal distinction between the blameless writing that we cannot remember and the perfect writing that we cannot forget. What, then, makes the difference? It is not made by the presence or absence of matter that appeals to the brain; for Swinburne is often at his best when he has no such matter at all and when the poetic idea is the merest film holding the foambell together.

> Love laid his sleepless head
> On a thorny rosy bed:
> And his eyes with tears were red,
> And pale his lips as the dead.

So begins a song of sixteen lines which is likely to outlast thousands of other verses, ardent, musical, and unexceptionable, which Swinburne wrote on the subject of love. The difference is made by the presence or absence not of intellectual matter but of *outline*. Much as he studied the Greek and the French poets, he was never sure of his outline, in the way that a poet like Gray, so far inferior to Swinburne in singing power, is always sure of it. Swinburne is an inveterate waster; but then he has more lyrical wealth to waste than almost anybody; he has as much as Shelley, more than Herrick, and more than Tennyson. His perfect work would fill a large anthology; it is now swamped in a dozen volumes. Yet one thing no anthology could exhibit, and that is his range of lyrical instrumentation. He may have nothing fresh to say, but he can always invent new metres and melodies, and to realise this gift we must read him all. He was not, like J. S. Mill, 'at one time seriously tormented by the thought of the exhaustibility of musical combinations'; nor yet, after reading Swinburne, are we. In making a selection from his prose the problem would be different. In prose he has always something to say, but he

has not the same command of the instrument. He is capable of producing prolonged and chaotic discords, or at least turbid melodies, which conceal, unless we are patient, the truth that he has to tell. Most of his prose is criticism ; he was a critic as well as a poet all his days ; and much of his criticism is good, and inspired, and indispensable. His long labours fall, not too strictly, into four acts or stages, which may be noted here, as I shall afterwards speak of his work with little reference to dates or volumes.

1. 1860 to 1866. Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909), though not one of those who excel in poetry before they have become men, was a ravenous and precocious reader. His biographer has shown that most of his tastes and enthusiasms were formed at school, and formed by books. It is hard, in such a case, to distinguish between nature and second nature. His passion for the sea, and for Southern and for Border landscape, and for his friends, was inborn. But the mood of Landor, or of the Book of Ecclesiastes, or of *Les Châtiments*, is a learnt and adopted mood, adopted yet sincere, literary and yet absorbing. Thus Swinburne's reading at home, at Eton, and at Balliol is of more than ordinary significance. He read like a poet, and not like a pundit. The Bible he knew from childhood, like Ruskin, and the Bible English colours all his writings, though he was too fond of twisting it into the service of anti-clerical rhetoric. At school he plunged into the study of English poetry, and especially of our elder dramatists. He was early conversant with Greek and Latin, as well as French, verse, and he acquired the English kind of scholarship that trains a man to utter his inmost feelings with truth and grace in a dead language. From boyhood to old age he adored Landor and Hugo ; and his mind and opinions, like his poetry, would have been very different without their influence. In *Thalassius* (1880) he seems to hail Landor [1] as the foster-father of his soul, the father being Apollo ; at the feet of this 'warrior grey with glories' he had learned song, and 'high things the high song taught him' : namely, the love of love, the love of liberty and also hate and courage. His third apostle, Mazzini, was the subject of an ode written in 1857, and was afterwards to inspire *Songs Before Sunrise*. With this ode, and with an unsuccessful but quite distinctive prize poem on the death of Franklin, Swinburne's true career begins. Many of his themes, and controlling ideas, and personal enthusiasms were thus fixed before he was a collegian.[2] But the fixity need not be overstated. His mind, like his skill, expanded steadily,

to reach its zenith about 1870: but new conceptions of a larger scope, as well as new tunes to fit them, are to be found for long afterwards, even during the decades of repetition and self-echoing.

Two plays, *The Queen-Mother* and *Rosamond* (1860) were the preface to the sudden and public triumph of *Atalanta in Calydon* in 1865; and earlier in the same year was finished *Chastelard*, the first play of the Marian trilogy. He was to write much drama, yet it was never really drama; it was lyrical dialogue, or chronicle play, or fiction in scenic dress. But his lyric was really lyric. In the year following *Enoch Arden* and *Dramatis Personæ*, during the full tide of the novel (*The Small House at Allington*, *Rhoda Fleming*), and of learned or controversial prose (*Apologia*, Lecky's *Rationalism*), *Atalanta* marked a renaissance of choric and dithyrambic song; while in 1866 the first series of *Poems and Ballads*,[1] with their far wider lyric range, sealed Swinburne's fame for good. Some of them had been written as early as 1862. The book was met with a puritanic uproar of which nothing remains but the *Notes on Poems and Reviews* which Swinburne published in self-defence and which contain some of his most eloquent prose.

Most of Swinburne's moods are prefigured at this early date. He is full of *isms*, a strange assortment. His paganism is mostly genuine; his nihilism is violent and transitory; his mediævalism is that of a school, and never profound. His republicanism and anti-clericalism have hardly reached the stage of being ideas, but they are already passions. Whatever he touches, his mastery of lyrical language and melody is already effortless and absolute, though in point of structure and outline he is, and is to remain, most uncertain of skill.

2. Swinburne's hour of greatness follows. The next period opened in 1867 with *A Song of Italy*; the *Ode on the Proclamation of the French Republic* followed in 1870; but these productions are not salient. In 1871 came *Songs Before Sunrise*. The poet now takes up the heroic lyre at the bidding of Mazzini. He has a worthy subject, and his inspiration is correspondingly large and noble, political and European; and he begins to *think*; he finds words and song for the transcendental and speculative strain in his nature. His fertility during these years was most remarkable. In 1868 he published his interpretation of *William Blake*, a work which cannot be superseded. The 'epic drama' of *Bothwell* (1874) overruns five hundred pages. In 1872 Swinburne threw off his pamphlet *Under the Microscope*, in defence of Rossetti, and in refutation

of the charges of Robert Buchanan. Swinburne was in the right, but his mordant periods become hysterical.

3. A third, less determinate period of some eight years begins about 1874. In poetry it includes some of his purest elegiac and lyrical work. This is to be found in the second set of *Poems and Ballads* (1878). He is now more natural, and less noisy; he has more humanity and more charm, and produces masterpieces like *Ex-Voto*, *Four Songs of Four Seasons*, *Ave atque Vale*, and *A Forsaken Garden*. *Songs of the Springtides* (1880) and *Studies in Song* (1880) are less distinctive, and despite some beautiful exceptions they begin to show Swinburne 'marking time.' Yet in *Tristram of Lyonesse* (1882) he recovers glow and force for a season: and the volume includes the noble series of sonnets on the Elizabethan dramatists, which is a lyric accompaniment to his long series of critical studies. He had already begun, and to the end continued, these fervent prose 'appreciations.' No riot of language upon the surface can disguise their quality of poetic insight and discernment. Beginning with *George Chapman* (1875) and with *Essays and Studies* (1875), Swinburne produced in 1880 his *Study of Shakespeare*, and nine years later his *Study of Ben Jonson*. *The Age of Shakespeare* (1908) is also to be named. He wrote of Marlowe, Beaumont and Fletcher, Webster, Middleton, and Tourneur, and of many more; covering indeed a wider range of the old drama, and going deeper into it, than any other critic before or since. He published many other criticisms, including: *A Note on Charlotte Brontë* (1877) and *A Study of Victor Hugo* (1886). In drama this period is marked by *Mary Stuart* (1881) and by *Erechtheus* (1876), in which the lyrics have an ampler and more splendid sweep than even in *Atalanta*.

4. Meanwhile, in 1879, came a decisive change in Swinburne's way of life. His friendships, feuds, adventures, distractions, and habits have been related faithfully, and with a saving humour, by his biographer. But his art seems to have been little affected by them all. The painters and poets of his circle, and Jowett, and Burton, and the rest, influenced his life, and in verse or prose he praised them liberally; they did not shape or colour his way of writing. Even Dante Rossetti, whose advice and example should have told for concentration and sharper outline, did not affect it noticeably. Now, in 1879, after almost foundering in health, Swinburne retired into private life. In the company of his devoted friend, warder, admirer, critic, and man of business, Theodore Watts, after-

wards Watts-Dunton, he lived at the Pines, Putney, to the end, and lived chiefly to read and write. His great day as a poet was over, but a happy selection could be made from the verse of his later years. He continued to write lyric, and tragedy, and prose, all in abundance. His plays show great mobility of interest and variety of style, though they were not made to be, and could not well be, acted. The romantic *Marino Faliero* (1885) and *Locrine* (1887) were followed by the deliberately bare, though not prosaic, experiment of *The Sisters* (1892), a modern domestic tragedy. *Rosamund, Queen of the Lombards* (1899) and *The Duke of Gandia* (1908) complete the list. The third series of *Poems and Ballads* (1889) is full of threnody, patriotism, infant-worship, and excellent border-ballad : but a startling renewal of lyrical freshness is found in *The Tale of Balen* (1896). There are four other books of verse for the gleaner : *A Century of Roundels* (1883), *A Midsummer Holiday* (1884), *Astrophel* (1894), and *A Channel Passage* (1904). Some of Swinburne's best criticism is found in his *Studies in Prose and Poetry* (1894). In 1905 he unearthed his story of twenty-nine years back, *Love's Cross-Currents*. Many stray pieces, both of verse and prose, are recorded, some of them unprinted, some suppressed, some buried in files. They include sundry skits and squibs, personal, political, anti-clerical, or literary. The *Heptalogia*, anonymously published in 1880 and afterwards acknowledged, is a string of parodies on seven poets of the day, including Swinburne himself ; and *The Higher Pantheism*, *James Lee's Wife*, and *The Angel in the House* are there, admirably misrepresented. *Disgust*, which mocks Tennyson's *Despair*, is not in this volume, but is the most Puckish and riotous of all Swinburne's travesties.

II

From a humourist of this kind, so impressionable to the styles of others, we are right in expecting plenty of facile and finished *pastiche*, which is sometimes a pure joke and sometimes dead in earnest ; and in the first set of *Poems and Ballads* we get it. Swinburne pays his dues to the mediævalism of the hour in the Morrisian-Chaucerian diction of *St. Dorothy* and other such pieces. The little *Pilgrimage of Pleasure*,[1] an early work posthumously published, and written for young people, is a capital imitation of the Elizabethan Morality. But the experiments in folk-ballad [2] and Border ditty pass into real poetry. *The Bloody Son* and *After Death* are pleasing essays

in the archaic, while in the third series of *Poems and Ballads* and in the *Posthumous Poems* (1917) there is work which at least rivals the best folk-verse of Morris and Rossetti ; that is, it is almost the real thing. Such is *The Bride's Tragedy*, and such are *Lord Soulis* and *The Worm of Spindlestonheugh* in the posthumous volume. They are surprising reproductions of the conventions, the themes, and the ring of popular poetry ; and it could only be said against them that they out-ballad the ballad itself. They certainly represent an attempt to get away from the ' Pre-Raphaelite ' finish of work like *Sister Helen*, and it has been surmised that this was the reason why they were not published at the time.

But Swinburne excels more in Scottish or Northumbrian lyric than in actual narrative, and in *A Reiver's Neck-Verse* and in *The Tyneside Widow* there is the pulse and sweep of the moorland air. That air was inherited in his blood, and in his youth he drank it in :

> Reining my rhymes into buoyant order
> Through honeyed leagues of the northland border.

Such work is therefore original, though in form it belongs to the *revived* revival of the moment. Akin, yet different and equally sound, is the style of *A Jacobite Exile* :

> O weel were they that fell fighting
> On dark Drumossie's day :
> They keep their hame ayont the faem,
> And we die far away.

Swinburne had much too good an ear to make these verses over-smooth ; his file has carefully roughened them.

In his use of the diction of the Bible there is a similar mixture of earnest and parody, and sometimes a touch of the hysterical. This is a large topic : for in one sense the influence reaches every corner of his poetry, and is a main source of his purity of language. But it leaves more definable traces. It animates the mammoth harangues of Knox in *Bothwell*. The language of the Preacher is, quite fairly, enlisted in *Félise*, and still more in *Ilicet*, and is audible in the exalted *Triumph of Time*, written after Swinburne's disappointment in a true-love affair. These utterances, at once clangorous and dreamy, of the desire for death and extinction remain the utmost expression of that mood in English verse. And a like mood, implying yet more of the element of *desiderium*, rules in the incomparable *Garden of Proserpine*. The Bible, however, is more plainly heard in rhythmical feats of cunning like *A Litany*—the kind of thing

that undergraduates long ago used to chant with blinds down and candles lit in a half-mock ritual :

> From all thy lovers that love thee
> I God will sunder thee ;
> I will make darkness above thee,
> And thick darkness under thee :
> Before me goeth a light,
> Behind me a sword ;
> Shall a remnant find grace in my sight ?
> I am the Lord.

It is a pity that Swinburne never versified the Psalms for chanting in this fashion. Often, as I have said, he turns the scriptural style against itself, or against the Churches ; a rather unfair device, but one that is redeemed in the application. For the lines *Before a Crucifix*, in *Songs Before Sunrise*, are not only an explosion against the Christ of theology, but a true, a heart-felt, and sometimes a splendid offering to the Christ of Galilee.

The classics furnish another source of inspiration. Swinburne could feel in Greek, and write Greek verse that won the approval of Thirlwall. His elegiacs on Landor, prefixed to *Atalanta*, are as delicate and spontaneous as Milton's Latin epitaph on Diodati, and much more finished. His two Hellenic plays show, in working as in structure, the controlling influence of a great model ; and we are told that he could repeat by heart most of the *Oresteia*. Several of his funeral epigrams upon Gautier are in Greek. The spell of the ancient choric measures is felt not only in his plays, and in work like *The Last Oracle* and *Athens*, but also in his plea for the supremacy of the ode above all other forms of lyric (*Dedicatory Epistle* to *Poetical Works*, 1904). His own odes, whether choric or stanzaic, are not all successes, but they contain some of his surest and highest writing. And Greek mythology or imagery is found everywhere, from *Anactoria* to *Thalassius*. The version of the *Grand Chorus of Birds from Aristophanes* is what it tries to be, a perfect equivalent to the ' resonant and triumphant ' metre of the original. And to Greek must be added Latin, which Swinburne also wrote well and with ease. One or the other language inspires his experiments in English sapphics, choriambics, and hendecasyllabics. These are triumphs of metrical elocution, and for a moment we might believe that the poet truly

> Saw the white implacable Aphrodite,
> Saw the hair unbound and the feet unsandalled
> Shine as fire of sunset on western waters . . .

III

But did he ? The question carries us for the moment away from his literary models to the heart of his early poetry. People used to clamour, when they opened on *Erotion* and *Laus Veneris*, that there was all too much of Aphrodite. Others felt, more justly, that there was little enough of the true goddess, whether Ouranian or promiscuous, in the whole collection. There is indeed endless tuning in her honour. Great is the musical value of Cotytto and Ashtaroth and the garden-god. Wonderful, we sometimes feel, is the energy, the execution, and the expression—considering what is *not* there to be expressed ; namely, simple humanity. The love that Swinburne in his youth celebrates is a true frenzy, but a frenzy of the brain and tongue. It talks about desire, it chatters of sin, it is spent in language. And yet, though a ' fever of the mind,' it is not a ' false creation.' The sound-patterns are of intricate surprising beauty and never repeat themselves. Now and then, as in *An Interlude*, everything is light and natural ; the feeling is unforced and unborrowed. But much of this love-poetry, as to its sentiment, is a compound of various book-inspirations. Given Swinburne's receptive temper, it is none the less honest poetry for that. But he tries to imitate the temperament of other men. Mingle the cults of the author of *Le Roi Candaule* and of the author of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, without the Voltairian lightness of the one or the native grimness of the other ; infuse some classical erotics ; toss in a bunch of *strange* herbs (for we must have ' strangeness in beauty ') from the foothills of the Venusberg ; and the steam from such a caldron begets, undeniably, a surprising dance of hitherto unknown tunes, of which *Laus Veneris* is possibly the most memorable.

In the preface to his delicate prose version (1895) of that poem, M. Francis Vielé-Griffin says that Swinburne *paroxise le sensualisme terrible que sa race réfrène* ; and that his work becomes less interesting, ' logically,' with the decrease of his *fougue virile*. But this is all a mistake ; the ' paroxysm ' is cerebral, and musical, and verbal, and the poet's powers only bloomed to the full when Mazzini had told him that there ' must be no more of this love-frenzy.' *Laus Veneris* is a wonderful, but not a great poem. The story comes and goes erratically ; the contrast of Christ and Venus is run off its feet ; and the beauty lies, partly in the linked measure (suggested by FitzGerald's in the *Rubáiyát*, though not the

same), partly in single felicities (' Her beds are full of perfume and sad sound '—' The little broken laugh that spoils a kiss ') ; but still more in the clear-hued marginal pictures of this strange missal, with their distinct detail, of the sort that used to be called ' Pre-Raphaelite ' :

> Knights gather, riding sharp for cold ; I know
> The ways and woods are strangled with the snow ;
> And with short song the maidens spin and sit
> Until Christ's birthnight, lily-like, arow.

This is how *Laus Veneris* sounds in the French poet's prose :

> Dehors, ce doit être l'hiver parmi les hommes :—Car aux barreaux d'or des vantaux, encore,—J'ai ouï, toute la nuit et toutes les heures de la nuit —Goutter la pluie des ailes mouillées du vent et de ses doigts.

In *Dolores* the plastic and rhythmical power is greater, nor has time marred this great musical invention, with its deep-troughed and proudly-crested undulations, and its double rhymes, and its shortened burden. The classical or Eastern names of the old ambiguous gods are marshalled with Miltonic skill. They are, we hear, dead gods, but their essence is concentrated in the anti-Madonna, Dolores, the personification of lust and satiety. There is something of the spirit of the Attis in the poet's ritual ; its purport was fully and eloquently set forth in a page of his *Notes on Poems and Reviews* (1866), a reply to the outraged critics, and an admirable piece of poetic self-analysis. The more heavenly or more human love is expressed in *The Triumph of Time*, with its note of actual suffering, and its hymn to the sea. Of the sea Swinburne always spoke ' from himself, and nobly from himself,' without other poets coming in between. ' Its salt *must* have been in my blood,' he wrote, ' before I was born.' *The Lake of Gaube* and *A Swimmer's Dream*, published long afterwards, relate real experiences and there is no mistaking the ring of a master-feeling :

> A purer passion, a lordlier leisure,
> A peace more happy than lives on land,
> Fulfils with pulse of diviner pleasure
> The dreaming head and the steering hand.
> I lean my cheek to the cold grey pillow,
> The deep soft swell of the full broad billow,
> And close mine eyes for delight past measure,
> And wish the wheel of the world would stand.

Some of the most durable of Swinburne's lyrics are the frailest in their web, and there is all the less to say about them.

Often they are in brief lines which are saved from abruptness by the caressing double rhymes, and are like the ' white butterflies ' that he describes in the *Envoy* to his book of roundels :

> Some fly light as a laugh of glee,
> Some fly soft as a long low sigh :
> All to the haven where each would be
> Fly.

A Match, *Anima Anceps*, *Rococo*, *Ex-Voto*, *Autumn in Cornwall* —the best of them, no doubt, were written in youth or not long afterwards. But there are also the roundels, and the verses to babies and children, which are later yet of the same stamp. Some of these are elegies. The series of thirty-one lyrics entitled *A Dark Month* is full of human sorrow and not merely of the ' eloquent distress ' that Keats found in *Lycidas*. But Swinburne's elegies and eulogies are so numerous as to claim a note apart.

They are written in honour of persons living or dead, known or unknown : of friends, children, heroes, dramatists, poets. Their form ranges from the tiniest and shortest song addressed to a new-born babe to such ample and concerted structures as the *Birthday Ode* of 1880 to Victor Hugo. Between come the irregular ode, the ode in stanza, the sonnet, the ballads, and endless other measures : *toute la lyre*. Swinburne has indeed a generous and Pindaric rage for praising. Wreath in hand, he makes a habit of attending every birthday, and funeral, or anniversary unveiling, of importance ; and he banters himself upon it :

> If I write any more necrological eulogies [1] on deceased poets, I shall be taken for the undertaker's laureate or the forehorse of a funeral cart hired out to trot in trappings on all such occasions as regularly as Mr. Mould and his merry men, and shall feel like Bosola in *The Duchess of Malfi*.

He has left no *Adonais* or *Thyrsis*, and little that goes home in the same way as the first line of his master's *Fantômes* :

> Helas ! que j'en ai vu mourir de jeunes filles !

Still he is one of our great commemorative poets. He never comes nearer to grandeur and composure than in *Ave atque Vale*. This poem was inspired by a false report of Baudelaire's death, which occurred soon afterwards (1867). The two poets had never met, but Swinburne's homage was none the less ardent to his ' brother unbeholden,' and in *Félise* and elsewhere there are traces of discipleship. The finale, ' For thee,

O now a silent soul, my brother,' makes us think of the poet that Swinburne might have been if the Muse had oftener bestowed on him the crowning gift of concentration. Villon too is a 'brother,' though a 'sad bad mad glad brother'—rather an unworthy and tricky chime, we may think, to serve as the burthen of so deeply felt and firmly finished a *ballade*. But the ten versions from Villon are justly famed as a fitting pendant to Rossetti's three masterpieces of the same kind. (And a word is due to the deft and accomplished translations from Villon and other French poets by William James Linton, the wood-engraver, who like Swinburne was a Mazzinist and a red republican.) The various offerings to Landor tell us much of Swinburne's powers and his weakness. There are the Greek lines already named. There is the long centenary ode of 1875, which consists of a huge rosary of lyrical judgements, strophe by strophe, upon Landor's poems and *Imaginary Conversations*. Fervent and sustained though it be, it is fatiguing, and wants the salience, as of a Latin Landorian epigram, which marks the earlier elegy :

> And thou, his Florence, to thy trust
> Receive and keep,
> Keep safe his dedicated dust,
> His sacred sleep.

So too, in the long *Birthday Ode* to Hugo we miss the distinctness of impression, and also the transcendental note, that are found in the ode of 1866. Here the stanza with its triply-surging wave is a worthy medium for the 'grand style' of which in Swinburne we have too often only the tantalising wraith :

> But thine imperial soul,
> As years and ruins roll
> To the same end, and all things and all dreams
> With the same wreck and roar
> Drift on the dim same shore,
> Still in the bitter foam and brackish streams
> Tracks the fresh waterspring to be
> And sudden sweeter fountains in the sea.

Many are the friends whom Swinburne honours in verse : Bell Scott and Burton, Barry Cornwall and Watts-Dunton are among them. The first *Poems and Ballads* are inscribed to Edward Burne-Jones, the book *A Channel Passage*, to William Morris, and the latter dedication shows that the heart of friendship in the poet, despite the lapse of time, is not outworn, any more than is the soul of melody. In both these

tributes the *Dolores* measure is employed, but instead of soaring and plunging it moves on a lighter wing.

Swinburne is often happier under the coercion of the sonnet-form. The need of a definite structure of thought, and of knowing exactly *what* he is praising or lamenting, does his genius no harm. In his hands the sonnet is rapid, in Rossetti's it is slow and weighted ; but Swinburne manages to pack it with ideas nevertheless. Criticism in song or lyric is difficult, and almost a contradiction in terms, but in short reflective lyric of this kind it is possible. In the sonnet on *Two Leaders*, who are Carlyle and Newman, it is truly achieved. On Carlyle Swinburne speaks variably for reasons that are not wholly to be explained by his indignation over the old man's fling at Charles Lamb. The praise of George Eliot is partly due, no doubt, to the delineation of Eppie in *Silas Marner*, and to the enthusiasm of the child-worshipper. But the series on the Elizabethan playwrights contains at once the finest of Swinburne's sonnets and the truest of his poetic eulogies. The most excellent, possibly, are those on Chapman, on 'grave and great-hearted Massinger,' and on *The Many*, eight of whom are struck off in a single sonnet :

> Nash, laughing hard ; Lodge, flushed from lyric bowers ;
> And Lilly, a goldfinch in a twisted cage
> Fed by some gay great lady's pettish page
> Till short sweet songs gush clear like short spring showers.

IV

Mazzini,[1] no doubt, inspired Swinburne to have done with his 'love-frenzy' and to 'dedicate his glorious powers to the service of the Republic' ; but this the poet had begun to do already. In the too long drawn-out *Song of Italy* he had uttered his lament over Lissa and Custozza, and had summoned the Italian cities, in a most musical roll-call, to bless the Liberator. The *Ode on the Insurrection in Candia*, which has less character, and *Siena*, with its solemn measure and its lofty reference to Leopardi, and *The Halt Before Rome*, prompted by Garibaldi's check at Mentana, were also composed well before the 'sunrise' of Italian unity. The poems of these years are the poet's running commentary on the great public events that lay nearest his heart ; and the best of them—amongst which the furious and frothing epilogue of *Dirœ* is not to be counted—show the highest reach, in point of form, spirit, and intellect combined, of his lyrical genius. The majority are included in

Songs Before Sunrise, and they are accompanied by the *Ode on the Proclamation of the French Republic* (1870). George Meredith's poem called *France, December 1870*, resembles this ode in its strain of grief interfused with hopefulness, and the firmer thinking and sterner ethical note of the more fitful and uncertain poet is in essential accord with the fervent spirit of the born singer, whose diction and melody are so much surer.

Swinburne's theoretic devotion to the 'Republic' somewhat narrows the inspiration of the *Songs Before Sunrise*—that is, if it be the reason for his neglect of Cavour, the 'master of the event,' and of Victor Emmanuel, the first constitutional king, not to speak of Daniele Manin the warrior-patriot. He keeps all the honours for Mazzini, who had been the first mover and the prophet of Young Italy, and a prime though a remoter cause of her triumph. Mazzini had long ceased to be a deciding force in affairs, and unity had come without the republic of his dreams. Swinburne, therefore, hymns 1870 in the light of the master's ideal conceptions, which had been framed and put into words thirty years before. And he goes yet further back. He celebrates with almost boyish eagerness the merely negative and revolutionary spirit. Mazzini, in his vision of social reconstruction, had put that spirit far behind him. Nor does the poet follow him everywhere blindfold, but respectfully disclaims acceptance of his 'sublime and purified theology,' and of his providential reading of history, for which he substitutes, as will be seen, a transcendentalism of his own. At another point the thinker and poet meet again. Mazzini speaks of Christ as the 'true man, the image of God, and the precursor of Humanity,' and this conception passes into Swinburne's verse.

The political creed of the *Songs*, at once exalted and elementary, is thus reinforced by a religion which cannot fairly be called a derivative one, though its ruling ideas had been long in the air. That religion is not pure Mazzinism; and it is not, though it is akin to, the 'religion of humanity,' which was debated by the philosophers, proclaimed by Comtist devotees, and adopted by moralists like George Eliot. It is best expounded in *The Pilgrims*, which is not only the loftiest poem of this order that Swinburne wrote but by good fortune also the most perfect and compact. The onward march of the elect souls, regardless of slights and sacrifices and death, in the service of their 'lady of love,' who is the human race itself, is chanted in a dialogue between the pilgrims and the doubting fellow-men for whose sake the journey is made and

the sacrifice accepted. It is a good religion, and in his proclamation of it Swinburne touches sublimity. *The Pilgrims* is of altogether a higher order of work than the *Hymn of Man*; splendid as that hymn is in its rhythmic movement and with its Aristophanic memories, it is too much charged with anti-clerical tirade, and too full of scripture turned inside out to be wholly poetry—'Glory to Man in the highest!'

In *Hertha*, however, and in *Mater Triumphalis*, and in the *Prelude*, there is a subtler and a higher strain. The 'sunrise,' of course, is the sunrise of freedom; but political freedom is only the means and the symbol of the 'freedom of the natural soul' at all points; and this, again, is but the unhindered expression in human life of the principle that quickens the universe. The spirit of growth in mankind, which points forward to the infinite, and brings a catholic and universal ideal into sight, sprang, says the poet, from origins that were not only inarticulate but inanimate—from the constitutive element of life and motion and spirit in all things. And thus the beauty of human action and sacrifice and of the dreamed-of better polity is seen as identical in essence with the living fountain of beauty on our earth; so that, in another sense than that of Sidney, who spoke only of the poet's own activities, 'the too-much loved earth' is made 'more lovely.' Hertha, the earth-goddess, is the source and scene of these manifestations, outlasting them all and ever quick with new births:

> I am in thee to save thee,
> As my soul in thee saith;
> Give thou as I gave thee,
> Thy life-blood and breath,
> Green leaves of thy labour, white flowers of thy thought, and red fruits of thy death . . .
>
> For truth only is living,
> Truth only is whole,
> And the love of his giving
> Man's polestar and pole;
> Man, pulse of my centre, and fruit of my body, and seed of my soul.

It would be as easy to find resemblances to this in the 'insuperable song' of Shelley as it would be hard to apportion the lyrical honours between the two poets. But behind the *Prometheus Unbound* we feel the reader of Plato and Isaiah, and the cherisher of Condorcet's visions of human perfectibility. In the younger writer we feel not only the costly bloodshed and public travail of the time, but also the new natural religion and the new science. I have noted (vol. i. p. 82) the response of Clifford to the voice of the *Songs Before Sunrise*; and,

conversely, in 1874, Swinburne read Tyndall's [1] Belfast address with genuine delight :

Science so enlarged and harmonised gives me a sense as much of rest as of light. No mythology can make its believers feel less afraid, or look to be reabsorbed into the immeasurable harmony with but the change of a single individual note in a single bar of the tune, than does the faintest perception of the lowest chord in the whole system of things. . . . It is Theism which seems to me to introduce an element—happily a factitious element—of doubt, discord, and disorder.

Swinburne never stirred from his unorthodoxy, or from his Pantheism, which he calls a ' clarified Nihilism,' thus doing it some injustice. More than once in later years his denial is tempered into a question.[2] As his friends disappear and his private graveyard becomes more and more populous, he asks, though he does no more than ask,

> If life have eyes to lift again and see
> Beyond the bounds of sensual sight or breath
> What life incognisable of ours may be
> That turns our light to darkness deep as death.

His instinct was surely correct when he wrote :

Of all I have done I rate *Hertha* highest as a single piece, finding in it the most of lyric force and music combined with the most of condensed and clarified thought.

Certainly, like Tennyson, Browning, Matthew Arnold, Patmore, and James Thomson, Swinburne revealed a new promised land for metaphysical verse, even if he only entered it once or twice. He could hardly explore it far, partly because the outline of his thought is not sufficiently definite, and partly because his genius was lyrical, and his tact usually prevented him from putting more weight of ideas into song than song will bear. Yet he got his ideas not simply into poetry, but into song. And into song he also put his personal revelation. In the *Prelude* there is no sediment, no formula, and no railing. The poet portrays the change of soul which had supervened since he wrote his erotic and despairing verses ; and the confession of his final faith is not more superb than the description, under the old imagery of the Eastern and orgiastic gods, of that younger phase of feeling. No quotation from this poem is possible, for nothing can be spared. It is one of the great confessional lyrics of our tongue, and if Swinburne had printed nothing else he would still have left us of his best.

Songs Before Sunrise has more unity of spirit and accent

than any other of Swinburne's volumes. Though not free from the usual repetition and profusion, it is also full of variety. The perennial novelty and mastery of its tunes could only be brought out fully by a technical statement. Amongst the most signal of the measures represented are those of *A Marching Song*, of the lines *To Walt Whitman in America*, and of *The Eve of Revolution*. *Tenebræ* and *Tiresias* may be added. But Swinburne was never to be at a loss for new tunes, while the faith and animating spirit of this volume, though they remained with him, did not again inspire him to a like performance. It was tempting, when this page was first written (1917), to look with a sense of melancholy irony on Swinburne's visions of united and freed mankind. But events, however protracted and formidable, pass, and the visions come out again.

He afterwards wrote much political and patriotic verse, seldom of the same quality. He has been called an aristocratic republican ; it is at any rate clear what and whom he hated. He hated the House of Lords and Gladstone and the Parnellites and Russia and the Czar. He adored Gordon ; he became a vehement Unionist. He always worshipped England, though in the *Songs Before Sunrise* he inveighs sadly against her apathy to the cause of freedom. He is generally more successful in praising than in railing ; his invectives have a 'forcible-feeble' tone which is rather fatal to them. In *A Word for the Navy* (1904) he uses deftly the old Scots verse-tag of the *Epistle to Davie*, in lines that may be recalled to-day :

> Where Drake stood, where Blake stood,
> Where fame sees Nelson stand,
> Stand thou too, and now too
> Take thou thy fate in hand.

In 1887 he honoured the 'blameless queen' in *The Commonweal* ; and next year appeared *The Armada*. This exalted and impetuous work, though it hardly bites upon the mind, fills the ears with music, and the power of lyrical execution is unabated. It is arranged in seven distinct and difficult movements and shows no sense of effort. In some ways Swinburne is the chief English master of the lyric that is inspired by public events. He loves his land not less than Tennyson, but is less insular. Meredith has the knowledge and vision and passion that are requisite, but his singing power is the prey of caprice. Others, from Drayton onwards, have left single pieces more salient and concrete than anything of Swinburne's, but their volume is

scanty ; or, like Wordsworth, have touched a sterner note, on the iron harpstring, but still have excelled in contemplative verse rather than in song.

V

Swinburne had published no narrative of more than ballad-length ; but from his youth up he had dreamed of making a long romance, or a brief epic, upon the story of Tristram. He was further incited by reading *The Holy Grail* in 1869 ; he had already, in *Under the Microscope*, stormed comically at the Tennysonian Arthur ; and he now wrote, in part as an antidote, the overture to *Tristram of Lyonesse*. ' If it doesn't lick the *Morte d'Albert*, I hope I may not die without extreme unction.' This overture of two hundred and fifty lines appeared, quaintly assorted with verse by Tom Hood and prose by Mrs. Norton and others, in *Pleasure : a Holiday Book of Prose and Verse*, in 1871. The rushing, long-breathed, splendid apostrophe to ' Love, that is first and last of all things made ' represents a fervent afterglow, dating, be it noted, from the Mazzinist period, of the inspiration of the first *Poems and Ballads*. It also contained the jewelled calendar of the months, and of their several heroines from Helen through Alcyone and Rosamund to Guenevere. The entire work was published in 1882. It must be said that a certain prolixity of musical verbiage keeps the story waiting and jades the attention. Morris too is leisurely, but for all his fainter diction he holds firmly to his thread. Chaucer, in his *Troilus and Creseide*, the other great love-tale of mediæval romance, amplifies, but he keeps a steady pace and a beautiful proportion, and he is a master of the art of letting his lovers portray themselves ; they change, they look into their own hearts, they act and play on each other, under the stress not only of Eros but of all the passions that spring out of him. Swinburne observes no scale, and his portrayal is rude and vague in comparison. Perhaps he makes up by his intensity. The sense of a love that is equally guiltless and disloyal, unforeseen and fatal, he does drive home to us. Matthew Arnold had tried the story, but such a theme was out of his range. For Swinburne the composition of *Tristram* was an artistic step forward. The sea he celebrates once more, and with irresistible impetus. The ocean-dirge is one of his most heartfelt things, and the whole story moves to the sound of mighty waters. There are other noble passages, like the scene of the lovers in the wood and the first meeting of Tristram

with Iseult of Brittany. But above all *Tristram* discloses a new and potent gift of sustained chanting, and the delight that comes from the mastery of a new instrument. The heroic verse is modelled

not after the Chaucerian cadence of *Jason*, but after my own scheme of movement and modulation in *Anactoria*, which I consider original in structure and combination.

That is, with a very rapid movement and continuous linking of the couplets, which nevertheless are well marked off from one another by the beat and pause upon the rhymes : the couplets sometimes becoming triplets, and the third line an alexandrine, in a way that makes us suspect a study of Dryden :

> Nought else they saw nor heard but what the night
> Had left for seal upon their sense and sight,
> Sound of past pulses beating, fire of amorous light.
> Enough, and overmuch, and never yet
> Enough, though love still hungering feed and fret,
> To fill the cup of night which dawn must overset.
> For still their eyes were dimmer than with tears
> And dizzier from diviner sounds their ears
> Than though from choral thunders of the quiring spheres.

This is lyric overpowering narrative by its own superb excess ; but if the two gifts are imperfectly harmonised in *Tristram*, the defect is amply made good, long afterwards, in *The Tale of Balen*.

Balen came out in 1896, after the writer had been pouring out thousands of lines somewhat devoid of freshness. It marks a reflorescence of power. Behind it are the lays of Scott and his school, and also those of Rossetti and Morris. It is different from any of them ; but the measure with its fourfold and threefold rhymes recalls the tunes which Scott had tried, somewhat fitfully to catch, and which themselves go back to mediæval rhymed romance. Swinburne rose to this opportunity. He never loses the pulse of the narrative ; the verse goes throughout unflaggingly, like ' the rioting rapids of the Tyne ' ; he is freed from the necessity of writing about the love of women ; the love related is that of the brethren, ' in life and death good knights,' who are doomed to slay each other in ignorance. The kind of accord that is contrived by Malory between the spirit of adventure, the creed of chivalry, the sense of supernatural mystery, and the wonder of the Grail, is kept intact. *Balen*, in any selection from Swinburne, could not be abridged without loss.

VI

In his dedicatory epistle of 1904 Swinburne refers, with natural piety, to those of his poems that are 'inspired by the influence of places.' They are, he justly hopes, saved by the personal emotion that quickens them, from the flatness that is the danger of purely descriptive verse. In the same preface he speaks of himself as 'an artist whose medium or material has more in common with a musician's than with a sculptor's'; —or, we may add, than with a painter's. This remark gives a clue to the character of his profuse and beautiful landscape-poetry. It is mostly a musical rendering of the emotion produced by scenery, when this is associated with some actual memory, be it only that of the beauty of the spot revisited. Nature is part of his orchestra:

> The year lies fallen and faded
> On cliffs by clouds invaded,
> With tongues of storms upbraided,
> With wrath of waves bedinned;
> And inland, wild with warning,
> As in deaf ears or scorning,
> The clarion even and morning
> Rings of the south-west wind.

We are often baffled if we look, as we do in Tennyson or Collins, for clear outline and pictorial effect; the colours seem to have 'run.' But this is the wrong way to approach an artist whose ear is keener than his eye. All the more to be prized, when they come, are the fragments of delicate and really observant writing. Such is *Loch Torridon*, where the scenes unfold as each corner is turned in the day's walk; and such is *The Cliffside Path*:

> Star by star on the unsunned waters twiring down,
> Golden spear-points glance against a silver shield.
> Over banks and bents, across the headland's crown,
> As by pulse of gradual plumes through twilight wheeled,
> Soft as sleep, the waking wind awakes the weald.

This kind of distinctness comes intermittently in the poems cited by Swinburne himself—and no one will quarrel with his choice—as among his most characteristic: *In the Bay*, *On the Cliffs*, *A Forsaken Garden*, *On the South Coast*, *Neap-Tide*. He might have added the *Four Songs of Four Seasons* with its overture on Northumberland—his own shire, the memory of which always quickens his verse. The feeling that he associates with scenes and places is generally straightforward and

simple. There is little of the note of philosophic or heroic elegy, such as abounds in *La Saisiaz* or *In Memoriam*; and less still of the mystical ingredient—except once, and then in a poem which is as deeply felt, though not so concisely executed, as any ode of Keats. This is *A Nympholept*; and the poet himself is the best definer of

the effect of inland or woodland solitude—the splendid oppression of nature at noon which found utterance of old in words of such singular and everlasting significance as panic and nympholepsy.

He is alone in the forest and is 'fulfilled of the joys of earth,' and is one with Pan. He recovers the mingled delight and terror of the primitive experience that once made men imagine such divinities :—

> the dumb fierce mood
> Which rules us with fire and invasion of beams that brood
> The breathless rapture of earth till its hour pass by
> And leave her spirit released and her peace renewed.

Then he is stirred by the 'unknown spirit sweet' that banishes the frown of Pan and turns earth into heaven; he is 'possessed by the nymph.' The absence of that stoical or purely didactic element, so markedly English, which informs the lonely nature-musings of Browning or of George Meredith, is noticeable.

VII

Atalanta in Calydon was a new departure in Hellenism. The lyric, the verse epigram, and the elegiac idyll, in the Greek style had been used by Landor and Shelley. Both of them, as well as Keats, had adapted the Titan legend. The Æschylean model is perceptible in *Hellas*. But the firm choric and episodic framework of ancient tragedy is not to be found in the romantic age, partly because the pull of the Tudor and Stuart drama, as then revived and imitated, was still too powerful. Afterwards came a certain reaction towards the classic restraints of structure. Matthew Arnold, in 1858, in his preface to his *Merope*, had pleaded for their resumption; and *Merope* itself followed the pattern; but then its execution was cold and discouraging. Five years earlier, Matthew Arnold had made, as we have seen, his protest against the romantic slackness of construction, the romantic engrossment with separate 'beauties,' and the romantic indifference to great, sound, and watertight dramatic subjects. *Atalanta* came in 1865; Browning's 'transcripts' began in 1871 with *Balaustion's Adventure*; and

the performances of plays in the original Greek multiplied after 1880 at Oxford, Cambridge, and Bradfield. *Atalanta* is not fitted for the stage, but it made an epoch in this Greek revival.

The subject, to use old-fashioned terms, may be called 'one and entire,' but it cannot be called 'great.' It has some pathetic and scenic beauty, but dramatically it is naught. The tragic crisis turns on the jealousy of Meleager's shadowy uncles over the honours of the chase, and on the clash of the sisterly and maternal feelings in Althæa, who burns the magic brand with which the life of Meleager is bound up. The story is none the stronger for the poet's enormous cascade of glittering and rushing language. It may be said that no one expects Swinburne to be dramatic; but then *Atalanta* is supposed to be a Greek play. In the scenes of action we are always reproaching ourselves that writing so wonderful should leave so little mark upon the mind, in spite of the pure and noble diction, the skilled use of *stichomuthia*, or cut-and-thrust dialogue in single lines, and the permeation of the whole by Greek idiom. As in *Erechtheus*, the union of these qualities with the flooding abundance that is native to the poet gives the style its peculiar character.

In *Erechtheus* the story is a better one because there is no pretence of a dramatic 'conflict'; all is pathos and sacrifice. Erechtheus and Praxithea give their daughter Chthonia, and Chthonia gives herself, as a free blood-offering to appease the jealous Poseidon, who otherwise would drown Athens under the waves of the sea and the spears of his invading son Eumolpus: that is all. The poet is left free for a purely lyrical treatment. The revelation of Chthonia's doom is delayed, in the Greek fashion, by hint and questioning and euphemism, but the response is never in doubt. The suspense is stronger than in *Atalanta*, and *Erechtheus* is more of a play. But in these tragedies the play is *not* the thing.

In both of them, as in Greek drama, the lyrical element is not confined to the choruses, but extends to the more exalted dialogues that occur in the episodes or acts. But a truer distinction may be made between the passages in regular stanza-form and those that fall into the ode-structure of strophe, antistrophe, and epode. The former kind prevails in *Atalanta*, the latter in *Erechtheus*, which is thus metrically the more orthodox of the two. The leaping and rolling crests of the stanzaic chants in *Atalanta*—it was on these that Swinburne was borne into fame, all in a moment. 'Before the beginning of years' and 'When the hounds of spring are on

winter's traces,' need no praise, but the poet's own instinct fixed on the 'antiphonal lamentation for the dying Meleager' as one of the 'best things' in these two tragedies. Only a poet of equal power and of the same order of genius could praise such poetry aright. It is, however, of the same species as the mass of Swinburne's other lyrics; there is no following of classical form about it. It is otherwise with the great things in *Erechtheus*, which are 'pindaric odes' of the kind that Swinburne, in his preface of 1904, proclaims to be 'something above all less pure and absolute kinds of song by the very nature and law of its being.' However that may be, the music of these choruses is at once intricate and spontaneous, difficult and triumphant. Nor is the music bare music or a feat of versecraft alone; it is the music of a lyrical subject intensely realised:—

> From lips how pale so keen a wail
> At the grasp of a God's hand on her she gave,
> When his breath that darkens air made a havoc of her hair,
> It rang from the mountain even to the wave;
> Rang with a cry, *Woe's me, woe is me!*
> From the darkness upon Hæmus to the sea . . .

Swinburne wrote many other odes in strophic form, such as *Athens* and *The Garden of Cymodoce*, and of course never failed in technical mastery; but he did not surpass 'Out of the north wind grief came forth' or 'Let us lift up the strength of our hearts in song.' One debt, and perhaps only one, these Greek plays, especially in the lyric parts, can be said to share with *Samson Agonistes*, and that is their debt to the diction of the Bible. In *Samson* such diction is natural; but it is a harder feat when the language which the old translators found for the Hebrew prophetic books is fitted naturally and without strain to the classic myths. The union of this language with idioms and turns taken from the Greek gives to the style not a little of its freshness and strangeness.

In 1882 he wrote his *Adieux à Marie Stuart*,[1] a tribute of Landorian grace and loftiness to the queen who had been for all his life the star of his imagination and in whose honour he had now at last completed his dramatic trilogy. *Mary Stuart* appeared in 1881, seven years after *Bothwell* and sixteen after *Chastelard*. In 1882 he also produced his article on Mary for the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. It is his most restrained and effective piece of prose, showing close study and sane historical judgement. It is in part a defence of Mary against those of her defenders—now little heard of—who would fain have

cleared her character at the expense of her brains and who set down her behaviour during the months before her marriage with Bothwell to cowardice rather than to passion. Throughout, Swinburne neither extenuates her crimes, nor does he treat them cold-bloodedly, but he sets them in their due proportion in the light of the standards of the time. The same spirit animates his plays. *Chastelard*, which was fastidiously revised, belongs to the period of his amorous verse, and there is more real passion in it than in most of the *Poems and Ballads*. The writing is nimble, and lyrical, and fierce, but the figure of Mary is only half-developed. In *Bothwell* we are confronted with a saurian among dramas, a *drame épique* or 'chronicle history,' founded on the documents but not constrained by them, and surprisingly easy to read in spite of the occasional stridency of the rhetorical or lyrical pitch. The characters are sedulously sketched, from Mary and Bothwell to the Douglases and the pages; and the crowning passage is the harangue of Knox to the citizens after the battle of Carberry Hill. The author of *Old Mortality* would have saluted the skill that is shown in this blare of biblical invective. In *Mary Stuart* the method is the same, but if anything is more rigorous; the action does not move so easily as in *Bothwell*; but the final pageant is nobly given, and is not dulled by the fidelity of the poet to his documents.

Five other tragedies stand to Swinburne's account and belong to his later years. The matter of *Locrine* comes from Geoffrey of Monmouth, that of *Rosamund, Queen of the Lombards*, from Paul the Deacon. Both plays are written skilfully, easily, and fervently, but the tragedy does not move us much, and the horrors, rather fatally, fail to horrify. In *Rosamund* the chord is strained until it snaps; and by the time that the queen has proffered to her husband the skull of her murdered father as a drinking-cup, we have no more feeling left than if it were a carven cocoa-nut. In *The Sisters* there is the same *haut goût*, but, as though aware of the risks involved, Swinburne here lowers the language to a pitch just above that of prose, so that his poisonings and bloodlettings, enacted now in an English country house by his Mabels and Reginalds, produce another sort of flatness. The tale of *The Duke of Gandia* would have suited the silver or brazen age of our old drama. The place is the Borgia court, and the murder of the Duke and his drowning in the Tiber are facts of history. But the highly charged manner of the Jacobeans is exchanged for a would-be deadly simplicity of diction. There is a certain return to the

poet's youthful fingering of strange impieties and luxurious appetites ; but most of this later dramatic writing, after all, is heated brainwork, with little human nature in it anywhere.

VIII

With his impeccable ear, Swinburne seems to have cared little for theories of prosody ; but his verse is an inexhaustible mine for the metrist. He has endless new tunes ; and he makes the old tunes as new as any of the new ones. He makes us feel that the resources of English verse are not less infinite than the substance of poetry itself, and that they are always *there*, in some Blue-Bird-land, waiting to be born. His language,[1] indeed, has a singular sameness, and he often permutes and combines the same set of phrases with unabashed iteration. But in the metrical scale he ranges from the briefest short-lined roundel to the longest possible lines and the most intricate strophic combinations. In these latter feats he is, no doubt, something of a virtuoso, trying how much the English language will bear. It would be too much to say that he never waters the sense for the sake of the rhyme, seeking at all costs for perfection of sound. But his execution can hardly fail. The mere mechanics of his versification, if fully described, would fill many tabular pages. And the account of his metrical art [2] would only be limited by the impossibility of stating in prose the effect of verbal music. But there would be chapters, at any rate, on Swinburne's management of the elaborate ode ; on his cunning use of short measures with rapidly recurrent and reiterative rhymes ; on his immense expansion and fresh modulation of all trisyllabic or anapæstic measures, and consequent widening of the metrical horizon ; and also on his varied uses of the staple heroic line of ten, whether unrhymed, or rhymed in couplet, or rhymed in stanza. Sometimes a single poem would furnish matter for several of these texts, and in proof I will only cite one which is not among the most familiar, namely, *The Lake of Gaube*. Into the waters of this lake amidst the Pyrenees Swinburne plunged in the year 1862 ; the lines were published in 1904 in the book called *A Channel Passage*. They fall into three movements, each with its own metre. The first is in decasyllables ; the leisurely stanza, consisting of the 'Troilus-measure' with an added line, describes the surrounding scene. The second, in elongated anapæstic couplets, describes the dive. In the third, using one of his old stanzas, a short-lined and rushing one, the poet

emerges and meditates. A good deal of Swinburne's inner feeling, and of his style and craft, and of his verbal weakness too, is represented in *The Lake of Gaube*. This is the beginning :

> The sun is lord and god, sublime, serene,
> And sovereign on the mountains : earth and air
> Lie prone in passion, blind in bliss unseen
> By force of sight and might of rapture, fair
> As dreams that die and know not what they were.
> The lawns, the gorges, and the peaks, are one
> Glad glory, thrilled with sense of unison
> And strong compulsive silence of the sun.

Such a stanza, with its easy motion, its variety of pause, its over-alliteration, its monosyllabic fifth line, and its potent last line weighted with the word *compulsive*, is of the sort that Swinburne could turn out almost in his sleep, at any time of his life. It satisfies the ear, but it leaves no definite image on the mind. But the second passage tells of something felt and done, and the measure gives the actual rhythm of the swimmer's ' header ' and uprising :

> So plunges the downward swimmer, embraced of the water unfathomed of man,
> The darkness unplummeted, icier than seas in midwinter, for blessing or ban ;
> And swiftly and sweetly, when strength and breath fall short, and the dive is done,
> Shoots up as a shaft from the dark depth shot, sped straight into sight of the sun ;
> And sheer through the snow-soft water, more dark than the roof of the pines above,
> Strikes forth, and is glad as a bird whose flight is impelled and sustained of love.

In the third measure the poet intimates his final faith, which is something different from, however well it may consist with, the transcendental enthusiasm and Pantheism of *Songs Before Sunrise*. Those speculations, he says, may or may not be vain ; we can never know ; and the mystery of things admits of only one sure answer, which is courage. And in the tune of these lines there is a pulse of feeling, combined with a more than common perfection of surging and falling music, which makes them remarkable even in so sure and great an executant, and which has been told him by the waters themselves.

> Whose thought has fathomed and measured
> The darkness of life and of death ?
> The secret within them treasured,
> The spirit that is not breath ?

Whose vision has yet beholden
The splendour of death and of life ?
Though sunset as dawn be golden,
Is the word of them peace, not strife ?
Deep silence answers : the glory
We dream of may be but a dream,
And the sun of the soul wax hoary
As ashes that show not a gleam.
But well shall it be with us ever
Who drive through the darkness here,
If the soul that we live by never,
For aught that a lie saith, fear.

IX

There is a good deal of Swinburne in the early novel, disinterred and produced in 1905, and called *Love's Cross-Currents : a Year's Letters*. In this rather confusing little love-story, that comes and could only come to nothing, full of epigram run to seed, there is none the less a sharp light presentment of the great English scene, of the country-house existence that the poet knew, and of the old witty ladies that he must have met. It shows us a real but undeveloped side of his talent. And there are bits of really good, and consciously good, Congrevian wording :

Such a man is not the less a rascal because he has not yet found out the right way to be a rascal, or even because he never does find it out, and then dies a baffled longing scoundrel with clean hands.

Such a work, like *The Sisters*, reminds us that the author of *Félise* and *The Duke of Gandia* did live and move, not asleep, in the world that George Meredith was making his quarry ; and that under his Gallicism, humanitarianism, Elizabethanism, and so following, there was ever, and comically, something of the Etonian. Swinburne's recently published letters often reveal the antinomian and republican singer as an English gentleman of the familiar caste.

With all their frequent fierce extravagance of wording, by which, to use a sentence of his own, ' all effect is destroyed, all force is withdrawn from the strongest phrases in the language ' and with all their breathless *copia verborum* and their bewildering involution of clause, which reminds us of the Ruskinian sentence with the *rivets* omitted—for all this, his criticisms of books and authors have a habit of hitting the mark fair, and also, strange to say, a certain underlying dignity of taste. It is the dignity,

no doubt, not of a large still mind, but of a 'fiery spirit working on its way,' with an impish familiar ever in attendance. Swinburne is nurtured on the best literature, and is satisfied with nothing less than what is good. We are to look for little discrimination when he names Landor, and for none when he names Victor Hugo; and for still less, at the other extreme, when he has occasion to refer to Euripides, to Hazlitt, or to Carlyle, who are the chief and the unharmed victims of his prejudice. But between these poles, on the vast middle ground that is after all the chief haunt of criticism, Swinburne's nicety of insight and strictness of discerning epithet are only hidden by his abundance of words from those who themselves are not careful to discern. It may seem wild to call him judicial; but if we can suppose a judge tossing up his wig and dancing a Border fling on the bench, while he shouts or flutes or shrieks out a balanced and penetrating summing up, ending perhaps with a lofty high-wrought peroration, we shall have some image of Swinburne's mode of criticism. But he is not always thus. If he could have recomposed his pages on Byron into the key of his study of Congreve, he would have been more obviously what in fact he is, the acutest judge of drama and of lyrical poetry, and perhaps also of fiction, in his age. *Under the Microscope*, otherwise so incoherent in its ferocious jibing, contains a true and reasonable estimate of the talent of Walt Whitman, hardly inconsistent with the fervours of the lyric address to 'Heart of their hearts who are free.' The *Notes on Poems and Reviews* are more than a bit of rampant retaliation; they explain the intentions of the writer of *Dolores*, *Anactoria*, and the rest, with a clearness that we miss in the poems themselves.

Swinburne's wit is genuine, if it is mostly undergraduate wit *in excelsis* and seems to call for the frantic applause of a bump-supper. Some of the stray shots are the best, such as the description of Charles the Second's Duchess of Cleveland as 'a virtuous woman who was, if not exactly a crown, yet, undeniably, a coronet to her husband'; while another is the parody of Byronic verse in that carefully reasoned essay of the *Miscellanies*, which is as close and fine in its review of Wordsworth as it is one-sided in its condemnation of Byron. In the same vein Swinburne concludes his pages on Alfred de Musset and George Sand with the observation 'that probably he did not behave like a lady, but certainly she did not behave like a gentleman.' The imp here was at his elbow who inspired the *Heptalogia*, and the *Ballad of Truthful Charles*, which is now

at last fully reprinted; also the *Ballad of Bulgarie*, which is not.

Compared with even the best critics of his time, Swinburne comes out well. He certainly has not much 'poetic,' or philosophy of literature, and has left nothing like Walter Pater's paper on *Style*. His allusions to metrical principle are the note on the Ode in the preface to the collected *Poems* and that on the 'anapæstic heptameter' preceding the version from the *Birds* of Aristophanes; but there is no such methodical or workmanlike production from his hand as Matthew Arnold's lectures *On Translating Homer*. He is mostly content to write simply as an artist judging his fellow-artists, out of the treasures of his direct perception and in the light of his love for what is perfect or admirable. Not the worst way either, as may be seen from his examination of Matthew Arnold's own writings, which is as good in its own style as anything by Matthew Arnold himself. And then Swinburne ranges over critical ground which is hardly touched by his only possible rivals. For drama, except of the classical kind, Matthew Arnold seems to have had little feeling, and Pater only faces it fairly in his three famed essays upon Shakespeare. Indeed, well as he wrote of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Rossetti, Mr. Pater after all put most of his strength into the criticism of prose, and into an interpretation of intellectual history which was outside Swinburne's scope. On the other hand, neither of these good and great judges wrote anything upon the novel which in point of zest or fulness or accuracy can rank with Swinburne's studies of Charles Dickens and the Brontës, of Charles Reade and Wilkie Collins.

He is perhaps most to be trusted when he speaks of our elder dramatists. The *Study of Shakespeare* is full of light, and no pedantry can live near it. No sounder or simpler classification has ever been offered of the 'periods' of Shakespeare's dramatic writing. We may not agree with the tenet, strange in a master of rhyming, that 'rhyme was Shakespeare's evil angel'; but none of those who had so diligently counted rhymes and endings had perceived that the great poet's advance to the unhindered use of blank verse was also an escape from a dance in fetters on the earth to a flight in the freedom of the air. Swinburne's profound acquaintance with his Shakespeare gave him, above all, a priceless canon for the measurement of Shakespeare's contemporaries; a canon always at hand should his ardour for Webster or Marlowe lure him into the wrong superlatives. These lesser stars he read in Shake-

speare's light, and there was no fear lest it might blind him to theirs. Charles Lamb's notes are indeed pure gold, and Swinburne outdoes himself in the expression of his homage to their worth ; yet they are only a handful of gold. His own reviews will be found to span practically the whole of our Renaissance drama, in point of time from Marlowe to Shirley, in point of quality from Shakespeare to Porter ; he hardly neglects a name of the second or even of the third rank ; and on most of the playwrights to whom he has devoted sonnets he has also left a full and particular account in prose. His book on Jonson is the best example of a measured judgement, which, like his remarks on Dryden, shows tact in marking the different levels of work in a poet of the ' giant ' as distinct from the ' godlike ' order : always a difficult business, and not least for the lover of Æschylus and Marlowe. Swinburne is not impatient with Jonson because he is not Shakespeare. With Chapman, as with Blake, his task was rather one of discovery. The gracious chivalry and humour of Chapman's best comedy, like the noble thinking and imagery imbedded in his tragedies, had long needed and now found due exposition. Perhaps the joy of the explorer is somewhat evident in the glowing account of Cyril Tourneur, but here too, in the end, the scale is well preserved. Swinburne's *obiter dicta* on the text of some of the dramatists, as on that of Shelley, show not less delicate an instinct.

In 1868, when he published his study of Blake, the ground for intelligent study had hardly been cleared except by Gilchrist's *Life* and by the labours of the Rossettis (see Ch. xv., *ante*). The editorial achievement of Sampson, the poetic appreciation of Yeats and Symons, and the exegetical skill of Berger still lay more than thirty years ahead. Most of Swinburne's book is still as fresh as ever. When he wrote it he was but just emerging from the rebellious phase which, however different at bottom from that exhibited in the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, still specially qualified him to be Blake's interpreter. And he excels in a style of criticism which is the best of all for those who can but command it : he can translate the sense and transfuse the soul of a difficult great poem into lyric prose that is equally great and much more lucid. He also cleared some fringes of the jungle of the so-styled ' prophetic books ' with no less decision : a work of interpretation which has at last been completed by two living scholars, though it is not yet before the world. I will not recite the rest of Swinburne's discourses on modern poets from Collins to Keats,

and from Shelley to Tennyson and Rossetti ; they show the same qualities ; but would point, as one more proof of his almost infallible instinct for style in others, to the lately published letters in which he proffers textual improvements that were accepted by the author of *Jenny* and *My Sister's Sleep*.

For good fiction Swinburne had an eye as keen as Hazlitt's. He could and did repeat the words of Mrs. Gamp as surely and copiously as those of the Hebrew prophets. He was one of the truest of believers in Charles Dickens ; his study of whom, published late in life, is the amplest that he produced upon any novelist. The *Note on Charlotte Brontë* and the pages upon Emily are conspicuous for hard sense and freedom from exaggeration. The lyrical praises that follow are thus strengthened in effect. It is here that Swinburne's prose is at its best and surest. He is speaking of *Wuthering Heights* :

> . . . but most of all is it unique in the special and distinctive character of its passion. The love which devours life itself, which devastates the present and desolates the future with unquenchable and raging fire, has nothing less pure in it than flame or sunlight. And this passionate and ardent chastity is utterly and unmistakeably spontaneous and unconscious. Not till the story is ended, not till the effect of it has been thoroughly absorbed and digested, does the reader even perceive the simple and natural absence of any grosser element, any hint or suggestion of a baser alloy in the ingredients of its human emotion than in the splendour of lightning or the roll of a gathered wave. Then, as on issuing sometimes from the tumult of charging waters, he finds with something of wonder how absolutely pure and sweet was the element of living storm with which his own nature has been for awhile made one ; not a grain in it of soiling sand, not a waif of clogging weed. As was the author's life, so is her book in all things ; troubled and taintless, with little of rest in it, and nothing of reproach.

On two novelists of his own time Swinburne's essays still remain the best and the most wisely generous. One is Charles Reade, whose fitful and self-conscious but often splendid performance he vindicates so well ; the other is Wilkie Collins, whom critics sometimes pass by as merely the most ingenious carpenter of plots and purveyor of mysteries who ever dealt in secret drawers and cabinets with false bottoms. Swinburne does no less than justice to the excellence of descriptive and narrative, as well as of constructive, power in the best romances of Collins.

CHAPTER XVIII

OTHER POETS

I

A STRICT anthology, containing only what is excellent in the lesser poets [1] of this period, would still be a large one ; and the two chapters that follow are an attempt to point to the sources of such an anthology. Perhaps, in the age that opens with Sidney and ends with Herrick, the poetic accent was yet more widely diffused ; the uninspired, the merely accomplished element is more apparent in the production of 1850 than in that of 1650 ; but it may be doubted whether the actual salvage of treasureable verse is any larger. I do not here speak of the greater names ; for whom does Milton not outweigh ? but even so, he was only one master, and in the time of our fathers there were more than one, as the preceding chapters have shown. The present record, however, is of the *minora sidera* ; and these it is difficult to map and arrange in any clear fashion, partly because of their multitude, but partly also because they do not, save here and there, fall into marked constellations at all. Still, certain groups and likenesses appear at once. This chapter will touch first upon two writers who light up the interval before the rise of Tennyson ; secondly, on the band entitled by their enemies the ' spasmodic ' poets, who also belong to that time of transition but have some common characteristics ; thirdly, on a few others, who make their appearance during the next interval, which is found before the rise of Rossetti and Morris ; and fourthly, on those who are associated with, or generally akin to, these great medi-ævalising, mystical, and romantic poets. This latter group, including as it does Patmore, FitzGerald, and O'Shaughnessy, is much the most important of the four.

In his theory and practice alike, Sir Henry Taylor (1800-86) represents the protest of the elders against the younger school of romance. He sat at the feet of Wordsworth, he gave his allegiance to *Biographia Literaria*, and he dedicated his *Philip van Artevelde* (1834) to Southey. He revolted against Byron,

and classed Shelley as of the ' phantastic ' school, in terms that anticipate the censure of another Wordsworthian, Matthew Arnold. These wild poets, says Taylor, have no ' subject-matter ' ; they do not make enough use of their ' intellectual faculties ' ; the author of *Prometheus Unbound* does not enrich our ' stock of permanent impressions,' not he ! and the author of *Don Juan* is ' content with such light observations upon life and manners as any acute man of the world might collect upon his travels ' :

> Poetry over which the passionate reason of man does not preside in all its strength as well as in all its ardours, though it may be excellent of its kind, will not long be reputed to be poetry of the highest order.

However dubious in application to Byron and absurd in application to Shelley, this canon is good in itself ; and Taylor comes quite well out of his own challenge. He took his romantic tale from Froissart, and turned it into a well-conceived historical play in blank verse, as long as an historical novel, and therefore designed for the reader and not for the stage. Yet the idea is dramatic ; and if the reflective element usurps, and if some of the politics and fighting are rather dull, and if Philip himself is prone to moralise in the more prosy strain of Wordsworth, still *Philip van Artevelde* is really a poem. It contains plenty of life and movement, as well as of thinking ; Elena, the frail yet constant partner of Van Artevelde, is more than a noble sketch ; and in the lyrical parts there is no lack of ' ardour.' Taylor is said to have remembered his youthful experience when he wrote the love-passages. The book, coming between the vogue of Byron and the vogue of Tennyson, was very successful and often reprinted. Afterwards it was more respected than read. Taylor was intercepted by Tennyson, Browning, and younger poets. He produced more good work, like *Edwin the Fair* (1842), and he furnished many striking extracts for such old-fashioned anthologies as *Beautiful Poetry*, whose faded, green, stoutish volumes belong to childhood's memories.

Another poet, Thomas Wade [1] (1805-75), whose best work was done during this dead season, and who figures as a dim late survivor from the company of Darley, Beddoes and Wells, was long forgotten ; and his name was rescued only a quarter of a century ago. Wade has a true mystical vein which, owing to his dependence on the manner and music of Shelley, hardly finds original expression ; but it is really his own. He wrote

sonnets of no little accomplishment and beauty, though not very strict in metre; and his collection, usually called *Mundi et Cordis Carmina* (1835), contains precious matter. His sonnets on his infant escape the usual perils of being either too trivial for verse or too exalted (like some passages of Wordsworth's great ode) for the occasion. *Birth and Death*, and also *Fear*, are noteworthy examples:

> The way this Child doth creep into my heart
> Even fills my inmost being with alarm;
> For fears, which from my soul I cannot charm
> By any aidance of Hope's rainbow-art,
> Oppress me yet, that we are doom'd to part,
> And all his pretty looks and breath of balm
> Hear requiem'd by the grave-wind's winter-psalm,
> And childless to the home of love depart.

The Shelleyan *Contention of Death and Love* appeared in 1837; and, in the same year, the tale of *Helena*, which is modelled, though by no means slavishly, upon Keats's *Isabella*. The weaknesses and faintnesses of that model may be traced; but so too can the tender colouring and the intensity. Poets of this temper, which can only be inborn and never borrowed, abandon and absorb themselves into natural things—sounds and scents and creatures—as completely as another kind of visionary sinks himself in God. Helena cherishes, not a pot of basil, but a rose-tree, under which she finds that her baby, born dead and never known, lies buried. Its spirit comes to warn her of the discovery, and she is distracted and dies. A narrative stanza may be quoted; it is not mere *pastiche*, for if it looks back to Keats, it also looks forward to William Morris:

> The precious relic in the vase she laid,
> And with its former mould re-cover'd it;
> The vase with ivy green she did embraid,
> With eglantine and woodbine interknit;
> And a gold-broider'd silken cloth she made,
> To bind in sumptuous foldings over all;
> And closed it in an ivory coffin small.

Wade did little more in the way of pure poetry, and never quite found his own style. He had begun with writing plays (*The Jew of Arragon*, *Woman's Love*); later he translated the *Inferno*; and he lived on, unregarded, through the age of Tennyson.

II

How long, how desperately, the public taste can resist the judgement of time can be seen from the many editions of Philip James Bailey's prodigious *Festus*, which first appeared in 1839. Bailey (1816-1902) was then twenty-three; his poem had a great vogue at once. *Faust* was becoming known in English; *Cain* was still felt to be shocking, though undeniably powerful, like *Manfred* before it; people were ready for something grandiose, and cosmic, and sceptically argumentative, but still comfortable in its ending and justifying the ways of providence; and they had become used to the sophistries and jibes of Lucifer. Also they were ready to admire the very vices of the style appropriate to such an experiment; ready for a staggering, exhaustless grandiloquence of image, for the oddest rhetoric, cracked and strained and iterative; and for sustained rant. All this they got in *Festus*; but all this, no doubt, would not have gone down, even during the blank period before Tennyson and Browning had fairly emerged, if Bailey had not had some true poetic faculty, some gleams of noble style, some quality which might either ripen, or might run, as it did, to waste. He re-issued, altered, and enlarged, edition after edition; inserting, as time passed, parts of other poems which had appeared separately meanwhile, into the vast *corpus* of *Festus*; until at last, after fifty years, he produced the final version in 1889. This, as a whole, is an impossible production, a saurian of a poem. But lines and scraps and flashes show that Bailey has poetry in him somewhere:—

> The last high upward slant of sun on the trees,
> Like a dead soldier's sword upon his pall,
> Seems to console earth for the glory gone.

Yet it is hard to find in *Festus* anything much more satisfactory than the ditty (in scene xxi.):

> The crow—the crow! the great black crow!
> He loves the fat meadow—his taste is low;
> He loves the fat worms, and he dines in a row
> With fifty fine cousins all black as a sloe.
> Sloe—sloe! You great black crow!
> But it's jolly to fare like a great black crow.

That is not Bailey's usual manner; he uses a good many metres, none of them very well; but is most successful in his blank verse, which constantly reminds us, like much else in *Festus*, of the strain of the *Night Thoughts*—ambitious, Miltonic,

unsustained. Single lines like 'The dreamy struggles of the stars with light,' or 'Evil and good are God's right hand and left' (whatever that may mean), or 'One pale malignant star; that star, mine own' show the likeness. Poetry, in *Festus*, is always just round the corner; you never catch it for more than a moment; there is nearly always something wrong, because the writer is always straining to be magnificent, and wild, and different from everybody else, and equal to the greatest.

Another survivor of his own fame, gifted with more poetic faculty than Bailey, was Richard Hengist (originally Henry) Horne [1] (1803-84), best known as the author of *Orion, an Epic Poem* (1843). Horne, after a youth of sea-fighting and wild adventure, reappeared in England before 1830, plunged into letters, and in 1837 produced two tragic pieces, *Cosmo de Medici* and *The Death of Marlowe*. The latter is one of the best of the Elizabethan imitations then rife, and in the verse portions there is a pulse of no merely imitative passion; the archaic prose, as in all such essays, is impossible. *Orion*, appearing just after Tennyson's volume of 1842 and three years before Landor's English *Hellenics*, belongs to the older class of poems based on the antique. Like *Hyperion* and *Chrysaor*, it is a tale of the Titans; a short epic, in three books. It is also by way of being a hazy allegory, Orion figuring the poetic soul ever pressing onward, and the old Akinetos, 'the Unmoved,' the dead weight of philosophic apathy. There is some sardonic force in the picture; but the metaphysical passages are turbid. The poetry, in fact, comes in, though it does not wholly depart, with the landscapes and descriptions; and these are of a remarkable energy, clearness, and beauty; the blank verse, too, being in accord, though at times imperfect:

> More had the Goddess said,
> But o'er the whiteness of a neck that ne'er
> One tanned kiss from the ardent sun received,
> A soft suffusion came; and waiting not
> Reply, her silver sandals glanced i' the rays,
> As doth a lizard playing on a hill,
> And on a spot where she that instant stood
> Nought but the bent and quivering grass was seen.

Horne has also plastic power:

> Away, aghast at their own evil deed,
> As though some dark curse on themselves had fallen,
> Flashed the mailed moonlit miscreants into shade,
> Like fish at sudden dropping of a stone.

> The Moon now hid her face. The sea-shore lay
> In hollowness beneath the rising stars,
> And blind Orion, starting at once erect
> Amid his darkness, with extended arms
> And open mouth that uttered not a word,
> Stood statue-like, and heard the Ocean moan.

After *Orion* Horne wrote copiously throughout his long life, which included seventeen years of official distinction in Australia ; but he scattered his force, and has left little to remember but his rapid, vehement *Ballad of Delora*, which is sometimes splendid and sometimes comic : a poem accepted of Browning, and, like *Orion* itself, well worth reprinting. In 1844 he edited, and partly wrote, the prose papers called *A New Spirit of the Age* ; to which Elizabeth Barrett, still in her novitiate, was a contributor, offering to Tennyson praises of which his reputation still stood in need.

But soon after 1850 this need existed no longer ; and, within a few years of the issue of *In Memoriam*, when Tennyson was now a ' Laureate bold,' two younger poets, distinctly affiliated in style to Horne and Bailey, made their *début*. Alexander Smith's half-lyrical piece, *A Life Drama*, appeared in 1852, and Sydney Dobell's *Balder* in the following year. The poem of Smith made the greater stir, and indeed was saluted with a fervour now hard to understand. Perhaps the public thirsted unconsciously for something more impassioned, more *abandoned*, than anything their laureate had yet given them : a desire which *Maud*, when it came in 1855, unjustly failed to satisfy ; while Morris's volume of 1858, which met any such need even more amply, was little regarded. Smith was extolled, and also run down, and accused of pilfering from other poets ; and certainly in the *Life Drama* there are echoes, but they matter little. Reading the poem now, we can hardly say more than this, that there is real ore in it ; but ore so mixed with slag and mere glistening *mica*, that we are surprised, on reaching the *City Poems* of five years later, that so much refining has taken place meanwhile. There are passages in *A Life Drama*, and single lines, of much beauty ; but there is no restraint or relief, and as a whole the poem is fatiguing. The style is purest in the songs. Aytoun, as will appear later, ' took off ' Smith, Dobell, and others admirably in his *Firmilian* (1854) ; and Smith, who had sense and good humour, joined in the general laugh ; which, none the less, did his reputation no good, and caused injustice to his later and better work.

In his *City Poems* (1857) Alexander Smith is at his best ;

most brilliant and compact in form, and less inclined to a scream at a high monotonous pitch or to tear his passion to tatters. He is always less exposed to the scoffer when he drops his blank verse—despite its colour and energy—and takes to lyric measures. *Glasgow* is more of a record of life, and less of the heated and excogitated fancies which desire to escape from life. Every verse hits harder than the last; and the poet's passion for the smoke and roar of the town is as genuine as that of Wordsworth for Helvellyn:

> O fair the lightly sprinkled waste,
> O'er which a laughing shower has raced!
> O fair the April shoots!
> O fair the woods on summer days,
> While a blue hyacinthine haze
> Is dreaming round the roots!
> In thee, O City! I discern
> Another beauty, sad and stern.

There is a sort of happy wildness of expression in the opening apostrophe of this stanza, that reminds us of Smart's *Song to David*. The poem, indeed, is chiefly occupied with a beautiful recital of the country images and scenes which the speaker does *not* prefer to the city with its 'black disdainful stream' and 'streets of stone':

> A sacredness of love and death
> Dwells in thy noise and smoky breath.

There is something of the same quality in *The Night Before the Wedding*. The blank verse pieces include *Horton*, *Squire Maurice*, and the long *Boy's Poem*; and the first of these contains a lyric, *Barbara*, which is worthy of Poe, full of swift, echoing, and ethereal music, while the language is almost homely:

> But, when rising to go homeward, with a mild and saintlike shine
> Gleamed a face of airy beauty with its heavenly eyes on mine,
> Gleamed and vanished in a moment—O that face was surely thine
> Out of heaven, Barbara!

Smith has a marked gift of poetic phrase, in his landscapes and descriptions, that fairly reminds us of Tennyson's, and may betoken some indebtedness to him; the 'old rooftree furred with emerald moss,' the 'beds of restless silver' that often 'shifted on the sea,' the 'desolate and moon-bleached square,' the 'gloomy fleece of rain' hanging at noonday, are but stray examples. He has hardly enough self-restraint or patience

with the world to unfold a drama or exhibit a character ; but the portrait of the kindly wastrel of genius in *Horton* is faithful enough to human nature, as well as being profoundly Scottish both in mood and subject.

Emphasis, want of gradation in style and of dramatic power —with these faults we must always reckon in Alexander Smith and his companions. But the allowance once made, there are few poets of that transitional age whose work, even at its weakest, has more life in it. In *Edwin of Deira* (1861), Smith's next book, there is plenty of chivalrous matter, and of pictorial skill ; and the blank verse, even though it would have been different but for Tennyson, is yet not ' killed ' by the side of Tennyson's :

> the sparrow flies
> In at one door, and by another out ;
> Brief space of warm and comfortable air
> It knows in passing, then it vanishes
> Into the gusty dark from whence it came.
> The soul like that same sparrow comes and goes.

The famed passage which is thus versified from Bede is to be found in his account of the reign of Edwin, which the poet follows closely ; the holy simplicity of the Latin is in odd contrast with the modern decorations and heightenings :

> Thus Coifi, visaged like the thunder-cloud
> That steeps the crag in lurid purple.

There is doubtless too much ' lurid purple ' in Alexander Smith ; but *Edwin of Deira* is an unduly neglected poem. The story he may have read in Milman's *History of Latin Christianity* (1855, bk. iv. ch. iii.), where it is well told.

The ' spasmodic ' ingredient in Smith was an accidental, or at least a youthful one ; there is nothing of it in his prose, which is sane and by no means over-excited, while full of feeling and colour. Poetry did not keep him, and he took to journalism and the essay. *Dreamthorp* (1863) well sustains the accomplished style of easy, confidential, imaginative talk, in the period between Hazlitt and Jefferies. Hazlitt's example may have encouraged Smith to use the brief, shotted sentence, as he sometimes does, but he writes without temper or aggressiveness. *Books and Gardens* is a pleasant, quiet, Addisonian paper. *Dreamthorp,* which is old Linlithgow, is often the real or supposed scene. In description and reminiscence Smith is always agreeable ; and one essay at least, *A Lark Singing*, is in the rarer strain. Smith's notes of *A Summer in Skye* (1865)

are full of poetic brooding as well as of humorous observation. His praises of Chaucer, the *Lyra Germanica*, and the Border ballads enable us to measure his tastes. He likes and enjoys with the soundest instinct, and avoids formal criticism.

Smith and his friend Sydney Thompson Dobell (1824-74) have little in common except their weaknesses, of which no more need be said. The verse of Dobell, if he did not achieve or aspire to the depth and concision of the best among the *City Poems*, has much more of the unseizable rainbow quality, and also a freer and more cunning melody than Smith commanded. Dobell did not publish much, and much of his work has no special character ; he seems to have known, even less than most poets, when he had written his best ; and yet, again and again, even when he does not concentrate or quite succeed, he at least plays upon the nerves which recognise poetry. He only wrote one *Keith of Ravelston* : a ballad that must not be read without its prelude, for it is supposed to be sung by a maiden on the eve of her marriage, who

> sings because she needs must sing :
> She sings the sorrow of the air
> Whereof her voice is made ;

and the shadowy kine, the shadowy ballad, pressed on us doubtless with some little artifice—accord with the singer's dream of the unknown. This poem, as may be attested by its general acceptance, is in point of perfection of quite another rank to anything else of Dobell's. In *Tommy 's Dead*, which is usually and deservedly coupled with *Keith of Ravelston*, the vein is different, being that of familiar and homely but unerring pathos : a vein that is more often unskilfully explored by the poets of this period, Tennyson included, than any other. The pathos of bereaved and talking old age is the hardest kind of all to get right, in verse or prose. These two poems, however, have the ghostly or visionary element in common. Both of them occur in the volume called *England in Time of War* (1856) ; and here also are *The German Legion*, *The Shower in War-Time*, *Dead Maid's Pool*, and other unmistakeable things. Dobell's aim is often very like that which is traceable in *Maud* (also issued in 1855), and may be defined as the display of lyrical skill, conscious to the point of what is called ' virtuosity,' and applied to the rendering of hectic moods and of tragic or pathetic subjects. Whether or no Dobell was influenced by Poe, he often has the same instinct for ringing the changes on

a sound or phrase, sometimes up to the limit of permissible effect :

> Like a later lily lying,
> O'er whom falling leaves are sighing,
> And the autumn vapours crying,
> In the dream of evening's gleam.

It looks easy enough.

Dobell did not attain to this style immediately, and his earlier poems, such as *The Roman*, ' by Sydney Yendys ' (1850), and the sonnets he wrote in concert with Smith on the Crimean war, are mostly in the elaborate forced manner ; while *Balder* (1854), though full of casual splendours, is open to the same reproach. *The Roman*, though inspired by the Italian movement for liberation, is a dreary drama without a trace of dramatic instinct, and shows little except the sound and liberal sympathies of the author. Dobell was precocious : he was reared and lived in some isolation, in spite of his acquaintance with the Laureate, Carlyle, and other men of letters ; he was able to travel, unharassed by breadwinning ; and there is ample witness to his high and generous character. His prose fragments, which are chiefly notes on art and philosophy, were collected after his death by Professor Nichol of Glasgow. A few of these scraps reveal Dobell's poetic sense :

> The first green on the trees, like a green haze, or cloud, self-sustained. The opening of the hawthorns—like a slow dawn in the moon that takes a week of earthly days. . . . Summer lightning, at night—rosy, like sudden dawns. Sometimes iridescent, like the iridescence of hot metal.

III

Some writers may now be noticed, who came on the scene before the great romantic renewal of the Fifties, or independently of it, who cannot be grouped with the ' spasmodics ' at all, and who are of divergent schools and styles. There is, first of all, the simple, unstrained, and sometimes moving verse of Richard Monckton Milnes, Lord Houghton (1809-85), which belongs in spirit, and often in actual date, to the early decades of the period. *The Brookside* was written in 1830, *Past Friendship* in 1844 ; the well-known *Strangers Yet* is later (1865), but similar in note. It seems an obvious kind of poetry, like Longfellow's ; yet few can write it well, and it is not to be slighted with impunity. *Shadows*, No. ii. (' They seemed to those who saw them meet The casual friends of every day '), is by no means

so obvious, but profound rather, and perfectly finished too. Most of Lord Houghton's pieces of this character are gathered under the heading ' poems of sentiment and reflection ' in the collected edition (1876). He wrote much else, in many styles, which is tasteful enough but shows little initiative : verses on Greece, on Italy, on the East, and on ' labour ' ; but his *Life and Letters of Keats* (1848) was full of new material and sound judgement, while his *Monographs* (1873), which contain notices of Landor and of Sydney Smith, have the same qualities, and bear the impress of his wide experience. Lord Houghton, who knew everybody, and who befriended and stood up for many men of letters, from Tennyson to David Gray,[1] had a gift for friendship and an eye for excellence. A traveller, a reformer, a reviewer, he cannot be said to have buried his talent in a napkin, but he certainly scattered it in somewhat small change.

A poet who calls aloud to be ' disinterred,' as Rossetti insisted, is Ebenezer Jones (1820-60). His *Studies of Sensation and Event* (1848) is full of absurdities that do not need the resurrectionist's office, and also of half-fermented energy, passion, and distress. *A Face*, *The Hand*, *A Lady's Hand*, and *Rain*, all have the poetic pulse in them ; they are often ridiculous, ' spasmodic,' or what you will ; but the spirit, and sometimes the form, is unmistakeable. Ebenezer Jones's gift is perhaps most articulate in *A Crisis*, which contains the promise of an intense, Keats-like nature-painting, and also a wonderful description of a girl leaning on a gate, faced by her lover. It is frank, and it is full of the intoxication and the relentless observation of youth. Jones was distracted by politics and other things and published little else in verse. His talent never worked itself clear, but he left these fierce adolescent fragments, and Browning as well as Rossetti remarked him.

There is a good deal less gift, and still less fulfilment, in the verse of Ernest Jones (1819-69), a Chartist who gave most of his life to agitation and fell back upon Radicalism after the dispersal of the ' movement.' His energetic Scott-like romances *Corayda* (1860) and *The Battle-Day* (1855) are less original than *The Poet's Parallel* and *The Poet's Bride*, which have an occasional touch of melody. *The Factory Child*, *The Factory Town*, and *Cries of the Nations*, like the *Songs of Democracy* (1856-7) are fierce and honest and full of swing, but they suffer from the sort of poetic blight that seems, I know not why, to wait on the song of social discontent during the last century, from the *Corn-Law Rhymes* down to the socialistic hymns of William Morris.

The verse of Arthur Hugh Clough [1] (1819-61), I have already called 'perplexed' poetry, and the term applies to much of the form as well as of the substance. The long, ambitious *Dipsychus*, or the 'double-souled,' which is a dialogue between the cynical or sceptical and the ideal impulses of human nature, is rambling and shapeless, like most works which betray the influence of Goethe's *Faust*. The noble and stately overture of *Easter Day, Naples, 1849*, is not kept up. The tales, in neat Crabbe-like lines, of Clough's last long production, *Mari Magno*, run to a Crabbe-like prosiness. Many such things speak of experiment and artistic uncertainty. Yet Clough's few successes are decisive, and defeat the insolence with which the critics have more than once tried to outlaw him from the company of the poets. The string of short couplets in *The New Decalogue* is without knot or fray, and the whole thing, of only twenty lines, has a Latin perfection. In his 'long vacation pastoral,' *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich* (originally *Toper-na-Fuosich*), written in 1848, there is a morning freshness; and Matthew Arnold, Clough's friend and mourner, found something Homeric in its 'dangerous Corryvreckan.' Certainly the manner of the *Bothie* suggests itself as a good one for the translator of the familiar parts of Homer—the accounts of food, and the implements, and the catalogues—things over which the translator, ever too much on his dignity, or on what he thinks is Homer's dignity, usually comes to grief; 'for it was told . . .'

> How they had been to Iona, to Staffa, to Skye, to Culloden,
> Seen Loch Awe, Loch Tay, Loch Fyne, Loch Ness, Loch Arkaig,
> Been up Ben-nevis, Ben-more, Ben-cruachan, Ben-muick-dhui;
> How they had walked, and eaten, and drunken, and slept in kitchens,
> Slept upon floors of kitchens, and tasted the real Glenlivat . . .

Not the hexameter, certainly; or rather, sometimes the hexameter and sometimes not; no, but a kind of playful counterpart of it, much less of a travesty than most other English measures intended to represent the hexameter. To pure verbal music Clough sometimes attained, and that more frequently as time went on. In his *Amours de Voyage*, written in 1849, a series of verse letters supposed to be written in Italy by various *dramatis personæ*, there is the sound of the Anio

> Falling, falling yet to the ancient lyrical cadence.

The *Songs in Absence*, written on his voyage to America in 1852, or during his stay overseas, show a happy command of liquid refrain and chiming vowel; and so, above all, does his truly

Sicilian lyric, *Ite domum, saturæ*, with its burden 'Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La Palie'—the call of the sorrowing damsel to her cows, with its subtly altered repetitions. In Clough's most exalted and best-known lines, the lumbering of the phrase and its clogging with many consonants are only in accord with the mood,—'Say not, the struggle nought availeth.'

Still, perplexed he is too, even more visibly, in his speculative moments; in his quest for a solid faith or mental stay, amidst that changing world of ideas, the complexion of which it is so hard for us to recover, but which finds clearer and more shapely expression in the verse of Matthew Arnold. Clough was the pupil of Thomas Arnold; and the prize Rugbeian, with his delicate, balancing, over-conscientious temper, somewhat eased by a sense of humour, was distracted at Oxford, and was swept away, though not for long, by the Tractarians. He drifted from Oriel and the Church. It is clear whence he started, but not so clear whither he set sail, except that it was towards the open, which he never quite reached. *Dipsychus* (begun in 1850), *The Questioning Spirit*, and many other poems, reflect his doubts. Some of them, like 'There is no God, the wicked saith,' show a leaning to the conservative side. But Clough never went back to the fold, never rested half-way, and yet never adopted, like others, the clear-cut negative position. It is this temper that gives him his interest as a thinker, or at least as an explorer; his explorations are more attractive than other men's discoveries. The sharp flashes of poetry, fancy, and satire are never far away. Clough spent some time in academic work, as head of the unsectarian University Hall in London, and latterly devoted much pains to his revision (1859) of the old seventeenth-century version of Plutarch's *Lives*, the preface to which is an example of succinct and scholarly prose. He also travelled a good deal. The Highlands and Italy, as we see, figure in his verse. But he is always an Oxonian. Behind everything is Oxford, with her 'humaner letters,' her allusiveness, her readiness to theorise on any subject, knowing a great deal about it through the grace of God solely: *healthy* Oxford (there is an unhealthy Oxford), with her young men climbing, bathing, walking, talking Aristotle at breakfast, haranguing, and marrying or resisting marriage, as they do in the *Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich*. For to that poem we return; it is Clough's happiest work, and the fullest of youth and nature, and the clearest from perplexities.

And here may be named by the way another idyll by a forgotten poet, the *Dorothy* (1880) of Arthur Joseph Munby,

which merits some of the same praises. Munby's earlier *Verses Old and New* (1865) also arrest us in the crowd. He tried the satirical-*macabre* style too, and pushed it to the point of cynicism in his pieces *Romney Marsh* and *Post Mortem*, and he also wrote verses in dialect. But *Dorothy* is far more poetical than all these. It is written in elegiacs, not always correct, but often beautiful. There may still be a future for this measure if it is used with a due regard to the requirements of the English 'spondee':

> Such was her dress: for her face, it was rosy and fresh as the morning;
> Brown—like a cairngorm stone set in the gold of her hair;
> Delicate pale soft gold, lying smooth on her sun-smitten temples,
> Lighting the dusk of her cheek, rippling away to her ears.

It is now time to review some of the poets who, whether by discipleship or general affinity, belong to the new romantic impulse of the Fifties and Sixties.

IV

I have written little, but it is all my best; I have never spoken when I had nothing to say, nor spared time or labour to make my words true. I have respected posterity; and, should there be a posterity whch cares for letters, I dare to hope that it will respect me.

Coventry Patmore[1] wrote in this Landorian tone ten years before his death in 1886. The respect that he claimed seems to be well assured. He has, at his best, the *stylus*, the sure and sharp engraving, which leaves him so distinct amongst the secondary poets of his time. And one or two poetical conceptions, which had been either treated without the requisite nerve, or in a spirit of false romance, or had been distrusted as alien to poetry, he expressed with intensity, sincerity, and audacity. His *Angel in the House* became vastly popular, though he looked on mere suffrages much in the spirit of Landor. But this glorification of the love that is within the law and within the fold, though it accounts for the popularity, was not fully apprehended by the people; as appears from the dance that Patmore was to lead his admirers, when he afterwards bid them celebrate in his company the to them '*unknown* Eros': a deity whom he honours with orthodox rites and a double outlay of incense, but who retains some pagan philosophic features notwithstanding. So that there remains, as in many an old Renaissance hymn to Love, a certain confusion of altars, the earthly and the heavenly affection easily inter-

changing places. Patmore, then, began with the ' wet, bird-haunted English lawn,'—haunted also by Trollope's clerics and their rose-like daughters—and he ended in an upper air full of white light and white heat, where soul and sense worship and marry. For him this journey is made possible by the turn that he gives to the high sacramental conception of the marriage link. He has well been called *anima naturaliter Catholica*. Later still, like so many before him, he expressed in nuptial terms the union of the soul with God, whose ' bride ' she becomes. And he found the words and the tune for each of the stages in this mystic's progress.

Patmore was born in 1823; his father, Peter George Patmore, something of a critic, became too well known for his anecdotes concerning his dead friends, who included Hazlitt. The son was brought up unsystematically, had to earn his way, and for many years was employed in the British Museum. His promise, hardly his peculiar gift, appears in his first book of verse (1844). But some stanzas in *The Germ* (1850) forecast *The Angel in the House*, while others reveal a new poet, who is touched, indeed, by Tennyson, but who is already himself :

> The Winter falls; the frozen rut
> Is bound with silver bars;
> The snowdrift heaps against the hut,
> And night is pierc'd with stars.

Patmore belongs to *The Germ* in virtue of his cult of beauty, his initiate air, and his turn for simplicity and compactness. He can etch landscape, and he leans to poetic epigram ; gifts that appear in *Tamerton Church Tower, or, First Love* (1853). The poem describes only a ride, with its scenery and the rider's ruminations, but the peculiar bitterness of Patmore is present already. In *The Angel in the House* a genuine subject is chosen, and most carefully plotted out. This work grew slowly ; the text was much revised ; and the two ' books ' of the final version represents three original instalments, *The Betrothal* (1854), *The Espousals* (1856), and *Faithful for Ever* (1860). *The Victories of Love* (1862), a sequel but an independent tale, retained its title.

The Angel in the House is barely a story. A young man marries the daughter of a dean without any difficulty, and after nine happy years describes the courtship. Each canto, besides the narrative, contains several ' preludes,' and these preludes, like pansies, are ' for thoughts '—the present thoughts of the mature husband. They forecast the more abstract and

uplifted style of Patmore's odes, and are free from the defiantly domestic and prosaic matter of the narrative, which is meant to provide a foil of outward commonplace to the inward intensity of the speaker's experience. Flatness is part of the programme :

> Plans fix'd, to which the Dean said 'Yes,'
> Once more we drove to Salisbury Plain.

But we must always be careful with Patmore ; for many of these flat things are written in the spirit of Praed, the author well seeing the joke :

> 'Honoria,' I began—No more.
> The Dean, by ill or happy hap,
> Came home ; and Wolf burst in before,
> And put his nose upon her lap.

The really prosaic writing, which has no such excuse, is like this :

> Connubial aptitude exact,
> Diversity that never tires.

But the antidote is found in the steady throb of rising exultation, and in the sudden strokes of saving bitterness. How sharp are, or ought to be, the pangs of even the happiest love !

> And ever her chaste and noble air
> Gave to love's feast its choicest gust,
> A vague, faint augury of despair.

Thus we hear, in one of the odes, of 'her *harrowing* praise,' and, in *The Angel*, of

> The light and happy loveliness
> That lay so heavy on my heart.

One of the preludes, entitled *The Chace*, describes the silent storming of a girl's heart, with surprising pungency ; it could only have been written by a man. So, in this long lyrical ballad, which purposely sinks without scruple, in point of melody and diction, and rises without restraint, while the average style is somewhere well above the danger-limit, the temper is anything but mere softness. The real topic is the progress of a pure love, with pure antecedents, both before and after marriage, and the sublimation, without weakening, of the actual passion, under the pressure of an otherwise eventless experience.

The Victories of Love is skilfully written in the old *Clarissa* form of a correspondence, and is in short rhyming couplets. It has more of a plot than *The Angel in the House* (which is in

simple quatrains). The blissful Felix and Honoria reappear, but are in the background. Frederick Graham, a cousin and old rejected wooer of Honoria, marries a humble girl, Jane, who is odd, shy, and limited, but not at all insignificant. She takes her place in society quite well, to the general surprise. It would have been a subject for Mr. Henry James ; but I fear he would have allowed Jane to be crushed by the formidable county women who act as chorus. Jane's dignity is crowned by her noble temper on her deathbed. Her letters to Frederick, leaving him free to re-marry, and full of subtle Patmorian argument to that effect, are masterly. Her deep, rather narrow piety (not at all Patmorian in cast) rounds off her character.

The success of *The Angel in the House* was soon assured. The critics praised it, the public bought it—hundreds of thousands of copies. There were jeers of course, and parodies, and solemn remonstrances, but the author, with his well-armoured and contemptuous mind, took no notice. He had put some of his sacred memories into the poem, though in artistic guise ; and thus the feeling, though not the story, is his own. It was composed during the years of Patmore's first marriage, 1847-62. Of him Johnson's saying that ' love is but one of many passions ' was never true. Rather, it is the only one ; but it comprehends a good many of the others, including religious passion itself. After his bereavement Patmore joined the Roman Church, and in 1864 married a lady of that faith. He left the Museum, and was free of material cares. This marks a turning-point in his life and art. He began to write his odes. His work in verse was to be finished, as we have seen, by 1886.

V

The forty-two odes, ultimately gathered up under the title of *The Unknown Eros*, were written at various dates, and constitute Patmore's most spacious and noble performance in literature. He uses the irregular rhyming form, which ranges in scale from a dozen to over a hundred lines, and in length of line from two syllables to sixteen ; a form, in its unchartered freedom, almost as exacting as blank verse. The span of thought and feeling widens correspondingly ; but love still predominates—love marital, or parental, or celestial ; always transcendental. There are, it is true, many deformities. Some of the sallies of political acrimony read like a bad imitation of Milton. And many faults of the metaphysical poets are there,

queerly revived : inflation, freakish transitions, obscure comparisons—the faults which, and which only, Johnson perceived in Donne and Cowley. Whether Patmore studied these writers, or whether their minds migrated into his, is not clear. He also has their sudden humorous oddness :

> But, on my word,
> Child, any one, to hear you speak,
> Would take you for a Protestant,
> (Such fish I do foresee
> When the charm'd fume comes strong on me,)
> Or powder'd lackey, by some great man's board,
> A deal more solemn than his Lord !

This is the modern Cupid speaking to the modern Psyche. There is also the fantastic enumeration of attributes ; in a few lines, ' Sweet Girlhood ' is a ' Sunshiny Peak,' a ' Bright Blush,' a ' Chief Stone of stumbling,' and a ' Hem of God's robe.' There is a good deal of this kind of writing, where the words are too big and too odd for the idea. But such extravagances do not annul the passages, the entire odes, where Patmore's peculiar splendour and stateliness of conception find fitting words. The simple parts, as usual in poetry, are the best. *The Toys*, *The Azalea*, *Departure*, *Tristitia*, and *Winter* are conspicuous examples. There is much variety of style, and the dialogue in *The Contract* between the first man and the first woman gives Patmore's measure as a writer of love-poetry :

> ' Lo, Eve, the Day burns on the snowy height,
> But here is mellow night ! '
> ' Here let us rest. The languor of the light
> Is in my feet.
> It is thy strength, my Love, that makes me weak ;
> Thy strength it is that makes my weakness sweet.
> What would thy kiss'd lips speak ? '
> ' See, what a world of roses I have spread
> To make the bridal bed.
> Come, Beauty's self and Love's, thus to thy throne be led ! '

Patmore's curious daring and power in handling a simple story come out well in his little idyll *Amelia*, where the lover leads his betrothed to the grave of his dead love ; she, the betrothed, shows herself generously minded, and

> all my praise
> Amelia thought too slight for Millicent.

Only a remarkable tact and talent could have steered through this subject ; and the finish of the whole poem is perfect.

Patmore's prose, like his verse, is commendably hard in grain : he is a mystic of the concise and consecutive, not of the

expansive, florid, and mentally dissolute order. He builds up his page from the *pensée* or epigram ; his notebooks are full of such polished splinters. He writes scornfully ; he is a thoroughbred with a very doubtful temper. He can certainly be a poor critic ; he can say that

> Blake's poetry, with the exception of four or five lovely lyrics and here and there in the other pieces a startling gleam of unquestionable genius, is mere drivel.

His accounts of Shelley, Keats, and Rossetti are acute and true in their censures, but one-sided and narrow as a whole. Rossetti 'always gave him the impression of tensity rather than intensity' ; but Patmore can forgive his fault of 'conferring upon all his images an acute and independent clearness which is never found in the natural and truly poetical expression of feeling,' when he comes on stanzas that seem 'scratched with an adamantine pen upon a slab of agate.' Patmore, in criticism as in creed, demands dogma—a body of 'Institutes of Art' ; and in art itself he pleads for the firm intellectual element—Rossetti's 'fundamental brainwork.' Only, as in his religion, by intellect he refuses to mean reasoning ; he means definite but intuitively given truth. Thus his own method is that of assertion. Once, in his *Prefatory Study of English Metrical Law* (first printed in 1857 as *English Metrical Critics*), he really argues ; it is his best piece of prose, a tractate full of caprices, but of much significance ; he leans towards the musical theory of metre but stops short of most of its extravagances. Patmore's other essays are often ethical and religious ; his philosophy of love, of purity, and of the imaginative process is set forth. In the end religion, love, and poetry reveal such deep affinities and interrelations that they are aspects, near allied, of the same reality. The Trinity of the theologians is not more fruitfully mysterious. The essay *Love and Poetry* is the best comment on Patmore's verses, and indeed on his mind generally :

> The whole of after-life depends very much upon how life's transient transfiguration in youth by love is subsequently regarded ; and the greatest of all the functions of the poet is to aid in his readers the fulfilment of the cry, which is that of nature as well as religion, 'Let not my heart forget the thing mine eyes have seen.' The greatest perversion of the poet's function is to falsify the memory of that transfiguration of the senses, and to make light of its sacramental character. This character is instantly recognised by the unvitiated heart and apprehension of every youth and maiden ; but it is very easily forgotten and profaned by most, unless its sanctity is upheld by priests and poets.

There is the true Patmore ; that is the region where he enjoyed, in his favourite phrase of Cardinal Newman's, 'real apprehension.' His antipathies, his political flings and recluse outbursts, are merely picturesque. His essays are mostly gathered into the volumes entitled *Principle in Art, etc.* (1889), *Religio Poetæ, etc.* (1893), and *Rod, Root, and Flower* (1895) ; but many of the papers there included are of much earlier date, such as the pleasing one on *Madame de Hautefort* (1856). We hear of a burned MS., *Sponsa Dei*, where the parallel between the earthly and the heavenly love was venturously pressed, in the ancient esoteric way.

A line may be added here on the handful of verses left by Digby Mackworth Dolben [1] (1848-68), a young Etonian drowned in early youth. Dolben had a strong leaning towards the Roman faith, and almost as strong a one towards the Greek poets. Some of his hymns and devout poems, in their fervour, finish and simplicity, recall Christina Rossetti ; his version of a scrap of Sappho shows his skill, and one or two of his other lyrics give more than the promise of a poet :

> The world is young to-day:
> Forget the gods are old,
> Forget the years of gold,
> When all the months were May . . .

Dolben's colour and cadence more than once take us back to *The Germ*, as in the lines *He would have his Lady sing*.

VI

Some other poets also dreamed themselves into the mediæval temper ; but in Robert Stephen Hawker (1803-75), the vicar and civiliser of Morwenstow in Cornwall, it was inherent. If he did not believe in witches and the evil eye, he wrote like a brother concerning those who did. Not deeply but curiously read, he understood without being told the spirit of holy and mystical adventure, of sharp and passionate piety. His poetic force is at its highest in *The Quest of the Sangraal : Chant the First* (1864), a long fragment written independently of Tennyson or Morris. A certain quaintness, aided by the infusion of Hebrew words and references, colours the poem ; but it is full of masculine energy. There is nothing faint about it, and nothing modern ; the hard background of warfare is always felt ; and Hawker, with his experience of wrecks and wreckers, and his ministrations to the dead and the living upon his angry

coast, was himself a true man and warrior. The search for the 'vanished vase of God' is never ended; but there is something of it in Hawker's career. His blank verse is rather stiff and Landorian, but is his own:

> Now feast and festival in Arthur's hall:
> Hark! stern Dundagel softens into song!
> They meet for solemn severance, knight and king:
> Where gate and bulwark darken to the sea.
> Strong men for meat, and warriors at the wine:
> They wreak the wrath of hunger on the beeves,
> They rend rich morsels from the savoury deer,—
> And quench the flagon like Brun-gillie dew!
> Hear! how the minstrels prophesy in sound;
> Shout the king *Waes-hael*, and *Drink-hael* the queen!

Of Hawker's other poems the ballads and short lyrics are the most original. He began with Cornish ballads, in the Thirties; and his *Song of the Western Men*, or its burden 'And shall Trelawny die?' deceived Charles Dickens and, what is stranger, Scott and Macaulay too,[1] into the belief that here was a true antique of 1688. His other ballads, like *The Silent Tower of Bottreau*, are full of impetus; but a rarer thing is *Queen Guennivar's Round*, with its thrice-echoed refrain. Hawker's prose is good and richly coloured, and in his *Footprints of Former Men in Far Cornwall* (1870) he tells with gusto the tales of Cruel Coppinger the Pirate, of the giant Anthony Payne, and of other worthies. The best is *The Botathen Ghost*; this is the wraith of a maiden who must needs appear to an innocent lad until his father's dimly-hinted sin and hers has been purged by repentance; at last she is exorcised by the parish parson. Hawker's narrative of the wreck of the good ship *The Hero of Liverpool* recalls a similar one, by a reporter of genius, to be found in *The Uncommercial Traveller*.

In the verse of Sebastian Evans (1830-1909), conservative journalist, admirer of Cavour, designer of stained windows, and above all mediævalist, there is a most undoubted streak of colour and strain of melody. Plenty of *pastiche* too, certainly —yet of good *pastiche*; echoes of Keats, of Heine, of Browning. Evans is a *cheerful* mediævaliser, and all the sounder for that; he is not too solemn about the business. He is not afraid of the pious-grotesque; he is too pious for that. *Brother Fabian's Manuscript, and Other Poems*, appeared in 1865. The 'manuscript' is a string of separate pieces signed by the far-back Fabian, and supposed to be unearthed. Though one of them, *King Charlemagne's Daughter*, is ludicrously modern, and would never have been written but for the *Eve of St. Agnes*, the others

are rather notable. *Judas Iscariot's Paradise*, a version of the tale of St. Brendan, has a rush and a ring that remind us of *Rose Mary*. We hear

> Of the Worm of the world, high Jascomyn,
> Who wrestles and gnashes ever again
> To grasp his tail in his teeth in vain,
> So huge, that the mariners landed awhile
> On the ridge of his spine, and deemed it an isle,
> Till they lit them a fire, and felt it creep
> And shudder and shrink to the whirling deep;
> Of the Paradise isle, where the soft wing beat
> Of God's white fowl maketh music sweet . . .

This is worth saving, and so are *Nickar the Soulless* and *Of Robin Hood's Death and Burial*: but *Jock o' Glen Moristane*, one of the 'other poems,' is a better and briefer ballad. Evans's *High History of the Holy Graal*, which may stand beside Hawker's *Quest*, came out in 1898. *A Roundelay* and *Shadows*, which are not archaic, show that Evans could sing for himself. He has a turn for echoes and internal rhymes which is pleasing and unborrowed. It is a great satisfaction to find such things in a poet who has been swamped.

There is a romantic strain of a similar kind in Sebastian's sister, Anne Evans (1820-70), which may be heard in the rapid and by no means dispiriting ballad of *Sir Ralph Duguay*; but her real mood is that of musical melancholy—doubly musical, seeing that some of her best songs are set to her own tunes, and that their verbal melody, though informed by the musical purpose, is also quite independent of it. *Colin*, and *Roses and Rosemary*, and *Two Red Roses on a Tree*, are examples of her skill; and *May Marjory*, though no setting for it is preserved, has the same quality. But there is 'something' rarer still in *Tirlywirly*:—

> Tirlywirly, all alone,
> Spinning under a yew;
> Something came with no noise,
> But Tirlywirly knew.
>
> Tirlywirly sate spinning,
> Never looked around;
> Something made a black shadow
> Creep on the ground . . .

Miss Evans's scanty *reliquiæ* were collected in 1880 under the title of *Poems and Music*. She was a friend of Thackeray; and the memorial preface by his daughter, Lady Ritchie, is full of quotations showing that Miss Evans had a turn for humorous rhyme and epigrammatic prose.

Another of the Pre-Raphaelite fold, a genuine son of Oxford, Richard Watson Dixon [1] (1833-1900) was hardly noticed by the public, as a poet, for a quarter of a century. He figures in the biographies of Morris and Burne-Jones ; he nursed the Anglican fervour which they discarded ; he took orders, disappeared awhile, became a Canon of Carlisle, and published from 1878 onwards, a learned and judicial *History of the Church of England from 1529 to 1570*. Dixon's admirable verse courted obscurity. He began in 1861 with *Christ's Company*, and with *Historic Odes* (1864) ; then was long silent ; then, in 1883, won a certain note with *Mano*, his amplest poem, which, despite its beauties, has never been popular and never reissued. From 1884 to 1888 he printed privately three volumes, including *Odes and Eclogues*. In 1909 a selection from his work was edited by the present Laureate. Thus Dixon's verse, as a whole, is far too hard of access ; and, in the earliest Eighties, the seeker was forced to copy extracts in the Radcliffe Library, and so to learn the stately and unforgotten cadence of *The Fall of the Leaf*. Here the poet watches the trees—

> Each pointing with her empty hand
> And mourning o'er the russet floor,
> Naked, and dispossessed :
> The queenly sycamore,
> The linden, and the aspen, and the rest.

But that was in a later style. In *Christ's Company* the mark of the Brotherhood is plain. *St. Mary Magdalene* could almost be dated by a single couplet :—

> Her bosom trembled as she drew
> Her long breath through . . .

The same is true of *St. Paul*, *St. John*, *St. Peter*, and similar pieces. Rossetti's mediæval hues, his pictorial precision and concentration, are everywhere apparent ; yet these poems are original ; and so too is *Love's Consolation*, for all its superficial likenesses to Morris. It has a beauty and strangeness all its own, especially in the overture, where the 'monk of Osneyford,' thwarted in his earthly love, wanders, to be consoled by a Chaucerian vision of gracious knights and ladies. The sprinkling of abrupt phrase amid the smoothest of melodies is characteristic of Dixon. The *Ode to Summer* in the volume of 1864, for all its manifest inspiration ('Magician of the soul's melodious gloom,' etc.), is more purely musical throughout than most of its companions, and its vision and its tune are not those of Keats ; while the twelve-line song *The Feathers of the Willow*

is without a flaw and without a model. In his later books Dixon tried Greek stories, such as *Cephalus and Procris* : metaphysical themes like *Life and Death* ; and, in the *Ode on Advancing Age*, the austerer sort of irregular verse. This is his nearest approach, and it approaches very near, to grandeur, though there is no doubt a certain ruggedness too. But he is surest when he is short, as in songs like *Oh, bid my tongue be still*, and in the surprising *Fallen Rain*, where he speaks, as critics have been swift to remark—and speaks purposely (we can hardly doubt it)—with the voice of a twin-brother of Blake.

The long work *Mano* is written in a *terza rima* which observes with some strictness Dante's usual habit of isolating each tercet from its fellows by a pause in the grammatical construction. In English this rule has proved either too hard to keep, or, if kept, unpleasing in its effect ; the reason possibly being that the Italian double ending makes for a more audible continuity between the tercets, despite their separation in syntax, than our single endings can ever do. However that may be, there are whole pages of *Mano* (a poem naturally showing a close study of Dante) where the diction is positively the right, the only, the missing diction for the *translator* of Dante, as thus :

> And through this hollow, one, who seemed to be
> Of calm and quiet mien, was leading him
> In friendly converse and society ;
> But whom he wist not : neither could he trim
> Memory's spent torch to know what things were said,
> Nor about what, in that long way and dim.

The run of these lines recalls those passages in Keats's revision of *Hyperion* which reveal, as Mr. Bridges has pointed out, the same influence giving dignity and balance to the measure. *Mano*, however, as a whole, is modelled at once too closely and too ineffectually upon the style of Dante, whose long and often dull historical passages, like his allusive and inverted diction, are kept overmuch in mind. The story of the poem is hard to unravel and hardly worth the effort. It is told by the monk Fergant, in the ' garrulous and low ' style, says the author, of a mediæval chronicler—a style that is surprisingly well sustained in the monk's own comments. The actual adventures of the knight Mano, the servant of Pope Gerbert, the insewn tales of wayfarers and oppressed maidens, and the visions of holy men are all related in the same even, dream-like tone, with an effect that recalls Spenser rather than Dante. There is an inalienable strangeness—often crabbedness—about Dixon's writing, which but rarely clears into distinct beauty ;

but there are many passages and episodes—such as the bloody fight of the two women disguised as knights, the description of the forlorn Joanna, and of Mano's final deathward journey—which make the poem one of the best, as it is one of the latest, of those in which the purely mediæval inspiration rules. Another variety of romance, hardly less startling, is seen in the posthumously published *Septimius and Alexander, or, Too Much Friendship.*

A volume entitled *Madeline* (1871) was reviewed by D. G. Rossetti with warm acknowledgment of its 'essential independence' and poetic vein; and of all his associates few have more poetic thought to their credit than the author, Dr. Thomas Gordon Hake [1] (1809-95). The sonnet-series called *The New Day* (1890), and also Hake's shrewd and amusing *Memories of Eighty Years* (1892) bear out this impression. The sonnets, in their style of nature-worship, as well as in their rugged involution of language, somewhat recall George Meredith. Hake's mystical mode of naturalism is rooted in science, though distinctly alien to the agnostic cult of the time. But the poetry is more assured in earlier pieces like *Old Souls, The Snake-Charmer, The Cripple, The Blind Boy,* and *The Deadly Nightshade.* All of these are written in slow grave short measures, and all express sombre or strange conceptions in a style which is simple as to diction—sometimes to the verge of freakishness—and yet is charged with enigmatic intensity. It is a style, however, that carries off well even such a theme as that of Christ patrolling the earth in the guise of an unnoticed tinker who cries 'Old souls to mend!' or that of the 'snake-charmer' who wanders into the woods with failing powers and delirious senses and dies of a sting. *The Blind Boy* is a lyrical ballad of great beauty both for its arrangement and its tender feeling. The boy sees the world through the eves of his sister, and

> Better than she the blind boy feels
> The simple pictures she reveals.

The poet's own pictures of the nature that the brother does not see or the sister realise are of a high order. Hake commands a kind of muffled pathos; perhaps under the attraction of Rossetti, he practises great concentration successfully in pieces like *Reminiscences* and *The Wedding Ring.*

The copious verse of George Macdonald [2] (1824-1905) shows a marked aptitude for poetic experiment; and there is actual poetry, though somewhat fatally dispersed and diluted, in the blank verse of his long tales and dramatic sketches, and in his

many devout and mystical ditties, such as *The Disciple*, with their marked seventeenth-century echoes; and also in his Scots ballads, where there is too much good Scots, and in his English sonnets, where there is too little good English;. there is no end to Macdonald's adventures. Flatness, extravagance, excesses abound—yet for all that the poetic tendency is there. Perhaps it is strongest in the *Songs of Days and Nights*, and in some of the *Violin Songs* and the *Poems for Children*. But a happier skill is found in Macdonald's prose romance, *Phantastes* (1858), a curiously late example of the charm once exercised by the German romancers whom Carlyle had introduced to the English public. The chapter mottoes from Musäeus, Novalis, and others, and the strong family likeness to Fouqué's *Undine* and its companions, reveal this influence. The gently infantine tone, the vaguely moral sentiment, the over-sweetness of imagery and language, are all there; and so too, as the tale goes on, is the swimming rapidly-changing outline, which makes too severe a call on the attention, and is very different from the sureness with which the masters touch on the chord of indefinite suggestion. Yet *Phantastes* begins admirably, and the walk of Anodos through the forest amongst the flower-fairies, and his encounter with the baleful shadow of the ash-tree, and with the woven spells of the alder, is a true feat of fancy. This 'faerie romance for men and women' is best read along with the designs supplied by Arthur Hughes, the 'Pre-Raphaelite,' to a later edition. Macdonald also wrote novels, full of Scottish piety and dialect, and also of an overwrought sentiment in which he has found successors. One of the best known is *Robert Falconer*, a heroic personage who reappears in a more readable story, *David Elginbrod* (1863). Macdonald's strain of poetic fancy or whim, nourished by his favourite Germans, does not fail him; but the mixture of religion, mesmerism, love-making, and satire becomes, long before the end, preposterous.

VII

Something of the essence of romance, unfortified it may be but also unalloyed, is to be found in the four volumes of Arthur William Edward O'Shaughnessy [1] (1844-81); these are *An Epic of Women* (1870), *Lays of France* (1872), *Music and Moonlight* (1874), and *Songs of a Worker* (1881). The 'epic of women' is not an epic, but includes semi-lyrical studies of Herodias, Cleopatra, and others, not of all of whom are mentioned in Tennyson's *Dream*. One of the stories tells how God

became enamoured of the woman he had made, and afterwards set her down, fair and false, to be the mate of Adam: a bold notion, which perhaps shows the author's study of French romantic poets like Baudelaire and Gautier; he made some accomplished translations from their verse. O'Shaughnessy is at his best in his songs, some of which are sure of their place in the anthologies. He inherits, it is to be feared, some of the lapses which came down from Leigh Hunt through the youthful Keats and Hamilton Reynolds: the juvenile faintness of mood, and the exasperating fondness for the feebler qualifying words, *quite*, *very*, *so*. And his songs might have been different but for the existence of *Poems and Ballads*. But O'Shaughnessy, what with his penetrating melancholy, is more durably in earnest than the author of *Félise*. His versecraft and sentiment seem also to have been affected by Poe; he likes dying falls, and the cunning iteration of keywords, and internal rhymes and chimes, and pathetic anapæstic measures. Some of these traits are seen in the most personal and self-descriptive of all O'Shaughnessy's lyrics, *The Disease of the Soul*:

> There are infinite sources of tears
> Down there in my infinite heart,
> Where the record of time appears
> As the record of love's deceiving;
> Farewells and words that part
> Are ever ready to start
> To my lips, turned white with the fears
> Of my heart, turned sick of believing.

But O'Shaughnessy soon puts his models behind him and attains a true melody, a wail of his own. His keyboard of language is narrow, but the tones are pure, and the technique and sentence-building, often singularly intricate, usually come out right, though there are many unlucky lapses. He is essentially a sick man, an honest decadent, who lets himself float on his own tunes and moods, careless of consequence. In thought and in what is called poetical substance he deals little. He is the wind among the wires or the flame in the embers. He is not ashamed of weakness, for the expression of it is his strength. His fancy likes to work among the conjectured passions of the dead, and to ask what the memory of earthly love—always a sovereign and cruel power—may or may not mean to them:

> Hath any loved you well down there,
> Summer or winter through?
> Down there, have you found any fair
> Laid in the grave with you?

Is death's long kiss a richer kiss
  Than mine was wont to be—
Or have you gone to some far bliss,
  And quite forgotten me ?

What soft enamouring of sleep
  Hath you in some soft way ?
What charmed death holdeth you with deep
  Strange lure by night and day ?
A little space below the grass,
  Out of the sun and shade,
But worlds away from me, alas !
  Down there where you are laid.

Palgrave, in 1897, inserted many of O'Shaughnessy's best songs in the second series of his *Golden Treasury*, including ' We are the music-makers,' ' Has summer come without the rose ? ' and *A Love Symphony* ; and also ' If she but knew,' which is perfect in a Shelleyan style. Among his other achievements are the ' Aloe-song ' and *Outcry*.

Marie of France's lay *Le Fraisne* was already known in its Middle English dress through the extracts given among the *Specimens* of George Ellis. The five other tales presented by O'Shaughnessy he presumably read in the Harleian MS. in the British Museum, where he was employed ; he was an expert in the department dealing with reptile lore. They are *Laustic*, *Les Dous Amans*, *Chaitivel*, *Eliduc*, and *Yvenec*. O'Shaughnessy often treats the incidents as a mere canvas, and sometimes manages to spoil them. In *Eliduc* he makes the wife die broken-hearted, while her rival with the delightful name, Guilliadun, lives happy with the husband ; and this is a fall indeed ; for in Marie's tale the wife generouly cures the rival with a magic herb and resigns her own husband to her, and becomes a nun ; and so, after a time, does Guilliadun herself. But for *Chaitivel* O'Shaughnessy invents a sequel full of fierce imagination. As in the original, the lady has had three lovers, now all dead ; and now she is invaded by a love for a living man, Chaitivel. Here the new matter begins. One of the dead men has had nothing from her, another has had a tress of hair, the third has had everything. ' Down there ' they hear her pleadings for happiness, and bestir themselves terribly. One of them fights with Chaitivel, a ghost with a living man, ' until doom.' There is much else to show that O'Shaughnessy did not live to develop his power to the full. The *Lays of France* came out just after *The Earthly Paradise* ; they are weaker as narratives, intenser and more unequal as poetry ; and they, too, contribute to the revival of the mediæval spirit.

With O'Shaughnessy may be linked his friend, the blind Philip Bourke Marston [1] (1850-87), son of the dramatic writer John Westland Marston (1819-90). Philip Marston, during his short life, had much to endure besides his infirmity; he lost his betrothed, his sister to whom he was devoted, and his bosom friend, Oliver Madox Brown (1855-74), the painter's son, a surprising boy of genius. Marston's prevailing note of melancholy is thus genuine, and not literary, although he is manifestly inspired by Rossetti, Swinburne, and others of the group, who in turn hoped much from his talent. His verse is contained in four volumes, *Song-Tide*, *All in All*, *Wind-Voices*, and *Garden Secrets*, which appeared during the years 1871-87. The *Garden Secrets* are the happiest in temper and the most original in idea; the dialogues of the Rose, the Wind, and the Beech, and the speculations of the Violet and the Crocus on the feelings of the trees, are in a vein of soft fancifulness that is peculiar to Marston. His numerous sonnets, while often imitative, are very smooth and delicate in form; and some, like *Speechless*, 'upon the marriage of two deaf and dumb persons,' are curiously exotic. But like O'Shaughnessy, Marston succeeds best in lyric of the evanescent and dirge-like kind. *In Extremis*, *At Last*, *From Far*, and many more, are of great and elusive beauty, though the poetic idea be of the simplest and frailest.

VIII

Like the Brontë sisters, the shy FitzGerald has been much pursued by scholars, biographers, and votaries. 'Good friend,' he seems to say, 'have my *Omar* by heart if you care, but let me be.' A literature has grown up round him, though he left only a bundle of letters, some fragments of prose, four hundred and odd lines of verse which are partly translation, and some further translations (or transfusions) which would hardly have been saved if he were not their author. His own record is of the simplest; it consists of his writings, his reading, his friendships, and his meditations. Edward FitzGerald [2] (1809-83) read idly at Cambridge, where he consorted with Thackeray; Alfred and Frederick Tennyson, also lifelong friends, he came to know afterwards; the acquaintance with Carlyle was later still. All these and many more held him in exceptional affection. He soon planted himself for life in his native Suffolk. He had enough means, and did not need, or ask, to earn his way; he did not want to get on, or to write a big book; he kept away from the world, and wrote to his friends, or about them,

more often than he saw them. Journalism, and critical parley, and all controversy were out of his hearing altogether. Hence FitzGerald's freshness of feeling and judgement. An entirely *uninfluenced* mind, endowed with taste, and true to itself, is a very rare thing. FitzGerald had such a mind ; Lamb had it ; and, with all their differences, they are both masters of language, and of somewhat the same kind of language. Nor is this likeness wholly accidental, for FitzGerald loved and studied not only Lamb, but also the same tribe of old writers as Lamb did —Wotton, Evelyn, Sir Thomas Browne. FitzGerald's early lyric, *The Meadows in Spring*, was imputed to Lamb, who observed, as well he might, ' 'Tis a poem that I envy.' He might have said the same of the snatch ' Canst Thou, my Clora, declare ? ' FitzGerald hardly wrote any other purely original verse but the pensive short piece *Bredfield Hall*.

In literature, he wisely preferred ' the sunny side of the wall,' as he called it.

> Of course the man must be a Man of Genius to take his Ease ; but if he be, let him take it. I suppose that such as Dante, and Milton, and my Daddy [Wordsworth], took it far from easy ; well, they dwell apart in the Empyrean ; but for Human Delight, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Boccaccio, and Scott !

And so he says of Thackeray :

> He, you know, could go deeper into the Springs of Common Action than these Ladies [Miss Austen, George Eliot] ; wonderful he is, but not Delightful, which one thirsts for as one gets old and dry.

In his solitude he wanted companionship ; it was either that of the ' rough sailors and fishermen,' whom, in Mrs. Kemble's words, he preferred to ' lettered folk,' while he ' led a curious life of almost entire estrangement from society,' or it was that of persons who existed in books :

> What astonishes me is, Shakespeare ; when I look into him it is not a Book, but People talking all around me. Instead of wearying of him, I only wonder and admire afresh. Milton seems a Dead-weight compared.

FitzGerald, then, knew as well as a bee where to go for profitable pleasure ; he avoided the next, the wrong, flower, however high in favour and splendid in colour it might be ; noting sharply and truly enough just what perfume it did *not* possess. Hence his distaste for Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, and for his Arthurian idylls where, as he justly says, ' the *opus* and the *materia* seem to me disproportioned.' These compositions had not, he felt,

the freshness of 1842. 'I think some of Tennyson will survive, and drag the deader part along with it, I suppose.' FitzGerald's letters are sown with sentences like that; he ignored many good things, but he liked nothing that was not good. *Il ne savait pas s'ennuyer.* This kind of connoisseurship makes him a true critic, of the tribe of Lamb, and it also explains his dealings with the writers whose works he remoulded.

He published nothing till he was forty. His *Euphranor* (1851) is a Platonic conversation; the scene Cambridge, the setting the river and the wayside inn, the persons philosophic undergraduates, the talk something of a medley; and the aim is to delineate the well-poised, well-natured young man, with his body and mind in harmony. To complete his Greek perfections a ray of Christian chivalry is thrown in; and here FitzGerald owns the inspiration of that strange, exalted, and attractive medley by Kenelm Digby, *The Broad Stone of Honour*,[1] of which the first edition or instalment had appeared in 1823. *Euphranor* is written with all FitzGerald's nicety, even with excess of nicety; the picture of the green surroundings, and of the concluding boat-race, being the most memorable parts of it. The prose and verse of Dryden were among his admirations, and perhaps *Euphranor* owes something to the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* in its happy construction and its ease of language. It is FitzGerald's only piece of inventive prose. *Polonius*, the batch of aphorisms gathered from many authors, including himself, appeared with its pleasing preface in 1852.

Other critics are content to tell their author, living or dead, how he ought, or ought not, to have written. The mark of FitzGerald is that he not only does this, but acts upon his opinions. His business is to rewrite in English the work of poets in other tongues, in such a way as shall satisfy his artistic sense. Sometimes the process is simply one of omission, or transposition, as in his *Readings in Crabbe* (1879), wherein the *Tales of the Hall* are thus edited, much to the advantage of Crabbe, or to that of his popularity. But FitzGerald's first experiments in this procedure were made in drama.

The *Six Dramas of Calderon* (1853) are minor examples of the Spanish master, and were followed in 1865 by versions of *El Mágico prodigioso* and *La Vida es Sueño*, which are greater adventures. His procedure FitzGerald describes in terms that apply equally to his dealings with Greek and Persian poetry:

> I have, while faithfully trying to retain what was fine and efficient, sunk, reduced, altered, and replaced, much that seemed not.

Spanish scholars who have compared the originals say that he did not know the language too well, that he was out of sympathy with many things in Calderon, but that his selection and redaction show much skill. These experiments at least throw light on the forging of FitzGerald's own style. Some of the inserted lyrics are full of grace; the blank verse is highly wrought and charged with some Elizabethan and also some 'spasmodic' features. FitzGerald is even more daring when he turns to Greek tragedy. He went lengths with the *Agamemnon*, but still further with Sophocles. In a letter he calls that poet 'soothing, complete, and satisfactory'; but in *The Downfall and Death of Œdipus* (1880-1), described as 'chiefly taken' from the two great plays, he rolls them into one, partially rewrites them, leaves out Creon and Ismene, and for the choruses reprints the versions of 'old Potter': a most entertaining compound. And yet, most seriously, FitzGerald defends all his actions, and his preface is a penetrating piece of criticism. His aim is not 'to improve on Sophocles whether as a poet or a dramatist,' but only to represent 'the old Greek in sufficiently readable English verse,' and that simply with a view to 'the English reader of to-day.'

IX

FitzGerald came in sight of his own style, now familiar to all men, when he turned to Jámí, Attar, and Omar. Much has been usefully written about his handling of these originals; yet the true question for the reader is, what did the Persians do for *him*? What he found in them he treated as the potter, in their poems, treats the clay. But the Persians (to change the image) charged FitzGerald with the colour, the poignancy, and the intensity which gradually get into his verse. And he was thus impelled, we may think, to search among the English poets for a technique that should faithfully convey those qualities. He did not find it at once. The blank verse and diction of *Salámán and Absál* (1856) are finished, but are without much character; the pretty tale, with its rather flat allegory, gave little scope, though the rhymes of the little lyrical anecdotes are deftly twirled. 'It is still,' he wrote, 'in a wrong key: verse of Miltonic strain, unlike the simple Eastern.'

A Bird's-eye View of Farid-Uddin Attar's Bird-Parliament, finished after, but begun during, the poet's occupation with Omar, is much more remarkable, at any rate in form. The

Birds talk in turn, and under the guidance of their president, the 'Tajidar' or lapwing, some of them go, like Piers the Ploughman, on a pilgrimage in search of divine truth, to which a few at last attain. The translator works with his usual freedom; intent, he too, on 'attaining'—form. And he discovers a heroic rhymed couplet of unusual sonority and magnificence. We can hardly doubt of its origin. There are triplet-rhymes, and there is a cunning use of polysyllables, in themselves hardly poetical, yet raised into poetry—*integument, irrelevant, obliterate*—

> As Water lifted from the Deep, again
> Falls back in individual Drops of Rain
> Then melts into the Universal Main.

But this is sheer Dryden, Dryden translating Lucretius! More than that, it has the very accent, rhythm, and speech of Omar-FitzGerald; and so has the following:

> But the first Air which the New Year shall breathe
> Up to my Boughs of Message from beneath
> That in her green Harím my Bride unveils,
> My Throat bursts silence, and *her* Advent hails,
> Who in her crimson Volume registers
> The Notes of him whose Life is lost in hers.

The style of the *Rubáiyát* is not yet clarified, but it is there. One at least of the origins of FitzGerald's great line seems to be evident. For, as in the case of Chaucer, the *line*, which is the base of metre, is the real discovery. When discovered, it is doubled into a couplet; and each verse or *rubai* of the *Rubáiyát* opens with a couplet, and that couplet often has Dryden's ring:

> With me along the strip of Herbage strown
> That just divides the desert from the sown . . .
>
> Ah, my Belovéd, fill the Cup that clears
> To-day of past Regrets and future Fears.

There is no mistaking that. But it is only the foundation. For the lines are more freely run on and broken than they are even in *The Hind and the Panther*. And the foundation is disguised by the device which above all others has lodged FitzGerald's quatrains in the general mind, and which is a modification of one found in the Persian originals, namely, the usually unrhymed third line:

Somewhat as in the Greek Alcaic, where the penultimate line seems to lift and suspend the Wave that falls over in the last.

But the internal modulations are endless, and are best studied

in the successive versions of the poem. Hitherto this great metre and style have not seemed to be capable, as Spenser's are capable, of producing new effects in new hands. Swinburne, in *Laus Veneris*, used but modified the stanza. Those who have followed it without modification are praised in so far as they recall FitzGerald.

He had not before him all the poetry, and he therefore did not make use of all the ideas and opinions, which are credited to Omar Khayyám, the 'astronomer-poet.' He had in transcript first one, and then a second manuscript, both of them being sent to him by Edward Byles Cowell, his intimate friend and his guide in Persian studies. He was also affected, and his conceptions were enlarged, by reading the French version of Nicolas, which came to hand while he was preparing his second edition. Oriental scholars have enabled us to know exactly how FitzGerald moulded his material, and we learn upon authority [1] that

> Of FitzGerald's quatrains, forty-nine are faithful and beautiful paraphrases of single quatrains to be found in the Ouseley or Calcutta manuscripts, or both. Forty-four are traceable to more than one quatrain, and may therefore be termed 'composite' quatrains. Two are inspired by quatrains found by FitzGerald only in Nicolas' text. Two are quatrains reflecting the whole spirit of the original poem. Two are traceable to the *Mantik ut-tair* of *Ferid ud dín Attár*.

Two more, we hear, are inspired by Hafiz, and only three (all finally dropped) 'are not attributable to any lines in the original texts.'

The first edition, unheeded save by the 'pre-Raphaelites,' appeared in 1859. The second (1868) shows much rewriting and rearrangement, and is longer; the third (1872) shows further, but not so much, recasting, and some retrenchment. To compare these versions [2] is a lesson in poetic tact. The changes are made in order to avoid commonplace, or over-homeliness, or overstrain, or undue assonance or consonance, or congestion of consonants, or tangled constructions, or obscurity; and in order to ensure greater strength, a fuller music, a better balance, and in general that last touch of perfection which makes all the difference to the world's memory. FitzGerald nearly always, in the course of overhauling, lets well alone, or makes it better; he very seldom weakens it. Several very beautiful verses he at last omitted, as somehow below the mark; I will only quote one, which disappeared after 1868, concerning the 'garden-side,'

Whither resorting from the vernal Heat
Shall Old Acquaintance Old Acquaintance greet,
Under the Branch that leans above the Wall
To shed his Blossom over head and feet.

As in FitzGerald's other writings and in his letters, the use of capitals, italics, and special punctuation is not merely a pleasant old-fashioned way of printing, but a guide to his own utterance, intended to help the ear through the eye, and to enhance, by special emphasis, that glory of appropriate and musical words which he wished above all things to produce.

On the poem as a whole, in its iridescence and approved perfection, only three observations, by way of reminder, seem to be needful here. In the first place, the quatrains in the original Persian are not only separate independent units, but are arranged on a purely mechanical principle, and therefore form no series. It is FitzGerald who adjusts them into a sequence in which the diverse yet interwoven themes and moods, epicurean, sceptical, melancholy, or witty, appear and vanish and recur, along with the images of the potter, the cup, or the chessboard. The order and arrangement of the stanzas he shifted twice, and it was thirteen years before he was finally satisfied with it. Secondly, this artistic unity not only permits, but actually involves, an absence of consistency, or philosophic rigour, in the ideas ; which are linked together not by doctrinal but by emotional transitions, and by what may be called colour-effects. Hence all attempts to methodise are vain and destructive. Thirdly, one Oriental feature is omitted on purpose. In the course of the poem there are glimpses of several diverse creeds.[1] But FitzGerald finds in Omar no ingredient of mystical allegory, and he does not import any such ingredient. Be his opinion right or wrong—and it has been contested—here, as always, he acts upon it.

CHAPTER XIX

OTHER POETS (*continued*)

I

Some of the poets who remain to be noticed, such as the Irish writers, or the bright swarm of satirists and humourists, fall into natural groups; the rest must be arranged more loosely. Many of these are being too swiftly forgotten in the crowd. Some, like William Cory or Margaret Veley, have left only a little work, but that little is precious; a fan-painting, a single spray of apple-flower. Others, like Roden Noel or the Earl of Lytton, have written much, and somewhat wastefully, and much sifting of their volumes has to be done. Others are popular writers who sometimes rise into poetry: of such is Sir Edwin Arnold. And there is Palgrave, who has wonderful poetic tact, but less inventive power. But to begin with the author of the greatest single poem which has not been yet described: this is James Thomson, and the poem is *The City of Dreadful Night*.

Real pessimism, whether inborn or theoretical, has flourished little in our islands. There is nothing to correspond to the stir which Schopenhauer made in his own country. We have no Leopardi, an artist of the first order who chanted his despair in verse and also reasoned it out in prose. Nor any De Vigny, who gave equally noble, if less perfect, expression to a kindred feeling. Swinburne's early nihilism was honest while it lasted, and *Ilicet* and *Félise* endure; but the mood passed; and it was always founded more on books than on life—on the study of contemporary Frenchmen and of the Preacher, Ecclesiastes. Such poetry was a brilliant flower, stuck without any roots into English earth. Not so with James Thomson [1] (1834-82), in whom the pessimistic temper is innate or second nature, and not merely a matter of doctrine. It does not, indeed, monopolise him, for some of his most beautiful work represents a revulsion from pessimism; but *The City of Dreadful Night*, together with some companion pieces, expresses the final

feeling and conviction of this true but baffled worshipper of beauty and happiness.

Thomson, though of somewhat humble birth and schooling, began hopefully, showed ability, and suffered no more early hardship than many another young Scotsman. When he was only nineteen the young girl whom he cared for died, and her image haunts many of his poems, especially *Vane's Story*; the memory of her idealised figure became a profound but not a killing grief. He was at this time at a military college, and was afterwards an army schoolmaster for eight years, but was dismissed in 1862 for a minor breach of discipline. He had already begun to print verse in the magazines, notably in *The National Reformer*, which was edited by his friend, the generous Charles Bradlaugh, the aggressive radical, atheist, and outlaw. Thomson was an outlaw too; he shared Bradlaugh's negative opinions, and all he writes is informed by the sense of his being *contra mundum*. He now had to live by his verse and prose, contributed to this and to dimmer periodicals. He was also liable to bursts of intemperance. But his letters and journals reveal a melancholy, not a hopeless, spirit; they are full of kindliness, and are free from the hysterical element; and there is plenty of dignity, hard sense, and courage to be found in them. At times his work appeared in journals of better rank. Froude put *Sunday Up the River* into *Fraser's*. Thomson was praised by Kingsley, was encouraged by William Michael Rossetti, was admired warmly, both as a man and a writer, by George Meredith,[1] and was often respectfully treated by the ordinary critics. Still life was difficult, and his melancholy at last hardened into a dogma.

He visited America as the secretary of a mining company, and wrote in his letters home some admirable descriptions of scenery. He also went to Spain during the Carlist rebellion as a press correspondent. Returning, he published the *City* in *The National Reformer* during 1874. It did not appear as a book until 1880, but it then won fairly wide recognition. In the same year Thomson published *Vane's Story and other Poems*, most of which had been written long before, and which included the beautiful tale of *Weddah and Om-el-Bonain*, his most perfect though not his greatest work. A volume of prose *Essays and Phantasies* followed in 1881, but made less mark. For some years Thomson produced little verse, but latterly his inspiration was renewed in *A Voice from the Nile* and other pieces. These, as well as various prose papers, were posthumously collected. His malady grew on him, and latterly he drank to a fatal

degree, dying painfully at the age of forty-seven. I have given more biography than usual, because Thomson's character, despite his disabilities, was more normal, and his spirit more capable of joyousness, than his chief work might suggest.

His poems should, and can, be studied year by year in the order of their composition. Of those that he wrote before the age of thirty few are without imperfection and few without interest. The angel of light and the darker spirit seem at this period to have contended pretty equally for the victory over his mind; the battle to the last was undecided, but may be described as drawn in favour of Azrael. In Thomson's early verses the shades of the poets themselves can be seen joining in the dispute. Shelley, Thomson's first idol, on whom he wrote fervently both in verse and prose; Keats, in whose thirst for enjoyment he shared; the insuppressible Browning; and, later, Blake, whose belated honours, conferred in the Sixties, he hailed with enthusiasm—each of these spirits gave some inspiration to Thomson, and can be seen to have affected his mind and his language. He wrote a good deal of buoyant or genial verse, like *A Festival of Life* or *The Lord of the Castle of Indolence*, which can be set off against *Mater Tenebrarum*, and *To Our Ladies of Death*, and to the long poem *The Doom of a City* (1857), where many images of *The City of Dreadful Night* can be found, already half-shaped into form. These works are avowedly suggested by De Quincey's *Our Ladies of Sorrow*; and De Quincey's prose is imitated, gallantly but hardly with success, in the prose descant (1862) entitled *A Lady of Sorrow*. But Thomson was no man's copyist; he had seen for himself the face of 'the mother of lunacies, and the suggestress of suicides'; and in these poems he had begun to beat out his unmistakeable anvil-music. The solidity and sonority of the single lines, the distinctive use of double rhymes at the effective point in an intricate stanza, and the skill in piling, upon what seemed a desperate and extreme climax, yet another and another; all these features, afterwards united in *The City of Dreadful Night* and even more forcibly in *Insomnia*, can be traced in Thomson's earlier compositions.

II

The same alternations of mood can be found in the maturer works of the next stage, which covers about ten years. The somewhat obscure yet beautiful fantasy, or vision, called *Vane's Story* (1864) contains much half-veiled autobiography. In

Sunday Up the River and *Sunday at Hampstead*, the intoxication of youth, love, and sunshine is expressed in a series of lyric measures, some of which are charming, if others are hurt by reminiscences of Heine ; a writer whose spirit and form much influenced Thomson, and moved him to make a number of respectable translations of the untranslateable. The Cockney element in these ' Sunday ' verses is essential, and is excellently inwoven. But *The Naked Goddess* (1866-7) is a greater achievement. It is full of real splendour, and as clean as fire, and the satire is well restrained. George Meredith's remark that Thomson had, " almost past example in my experience, the thrill of the worship of valiancy as well as of sensuous beauty ' is well justified by this poem, as well as by *Weddah and Om-el-Bonain* (1868-9), the work that most perfectly presents the freer and more normal side of Thomson's genius.

He found the story of Weddah in Beyle's *De l'Amour*, where it is told in Beyle's economical grim style ; and he expanded it somewhat as Keats, in his *Isabella*, expands Boccaccio. But Beyle's story is a better and stronger one than Boccaccio's ; the subject has enough in it to serve for a tragical-romantic play. The Juliet of the tale, Om-el-Bonain, in order to save her country, has wedded Walid without love. Her Romeo, Weddah, once plighted to her, but in vain, visits her in disguise, and lives in her rooms hidden in a cedar coffer. Walid hears of this through an informer, but he refuses to make sure. The coffer is sealed and dropped in a pit with water-springs : what matter for that, if it is innocent ? Om-el-Bonain pines and dies, visiting the spot, like Isabella. All have acted simply as they must. Thomson shows full dramatic sympathy with all the parties to the drama, husband, wife, and lover :

> He ends : We know not which to most admire ;
> The lover who went silent to his doom ;
> The spouse obedient to her lord's just ire,
> The mistress faithful to her lover's tomb ;
> The husband calm in jealousy's fierce fire,
> Who strode unswerving through the doubtful gloom
> To vengeance, instant, secret and complete,
> And did not strike one blow more than was meet.

Weddah and Om-el-Bonain is poetry ; it is told swiftly, but it also has the writer's characteristic ring, the ring which is heard in his best verse, as of steady exalted prose.

The City of Dreadful Night was written at various times during the years 1870-4, but its unity of effect is not thereby impaired. The poet's problem was rather how to keep the

unity from becoming monotony, and the reader's mind from being tired by the procession of bad dreams, through some eleven hundred lines. Thomson may not quite have solved this difficulty; but then monotony, and the inducement of a certain fatigue, are part of his intention. And he varies his dark pageant successfully by many devices, partly metrical. The sections telling of the march through the city and of its scenery are written in the weightier measure, a stanza of seven lines; and this alone contains the double rhymes, which are meant to fall on the heart like drops of lead. Alternate with these are the sections where the wanderer pauses and listens to the talk of the dwellers; and here the ruling stanza is a short stanza of six, with briefer ones still interspersed. The movement throughout is slow, and the device of steady iteration is used almost to excess. Further, there is a *crescendo* of imagery and symbol, wonderfully managed. Perhaps the middle part, with the preacher's sermon, is too declamatory, and drags; but the River of Suicides with its Spenserian gloom, and the angel, and the sphinx, and the transcript of Dürer's Melancolia, form a series in which the sullen glow becomes ever deeper, as source after source of possible consolation is destroyed. George Eliot's phrase about the 'distinct vision and grand utterance' of this poem is the happiest yet coined. The actual map of the city, with its lagoon, bridges, and surrounding waste, is given in two stanzas with wonderful distinctness. The style is pure and lucid, attaining most grandeur at the beginning and the close, and owing its quality not only to skill but to conviction. Without at least one poem, expressing the extreme spirit of negation with grandeur and sincerity, no literature can be called complete. Thomson's motto is taken from Leopardi, who had died in 1837; and though the two writers cannot be compared as artists, there is a Latin, a Lucretian clearness and strength in the best passages of both.

During Thomson's brief poetic *renouveau* in 1881-2, he returns more than once to the mood of *The City of Dreadful Night*; and his most finished short piece in that strain is *Insomnia*, where the risk of monotony is still better avoided, and which is a terrible and exact record of experience. Here he personifies the successive Hours of the tyrannous night, and uses the weightiest of all his measures:

> I paced the silent and deserted streets
> In cold dark shade and chillier moonlight grey;
> Pondering a dolorous series of defeats
> And black disasters from life's opening day,

Invested with the shadow of a doom
That filled the Spring and Summer with a gloom
Most wintry bleak and drear;
Gloom from within as from a sulphurous censer
Making the gloom without for ever denser,
To blight the buds and flowers and fruitage of my year.

On the other side, *Richard Forest's Midsummer Night* is a return to the more ideal and joyous strain of earlier days. *A Voice from the Nile* is in blank verse of a not wholly original tune, but still is magnificent pictorially.

Thomson's prose papers are of interest, and might be classified under the heads of the imaginative, the critical, and the blasphemous. The blasphemies, while remarkably wholehearted, are somewhat elementary, and of the Hyde Park order, and they suffer in effectiveness from the writer's want of a regular education. The collection, posthumously republished, called *Satires and Profanities*, illustrates this drawback; indeed, Thomson's humour of all kinds (except when he praises tobacco in the pages of *Cope's Tobacco-Plant*) is apt to be strained, and is not improved by his attempt to conjure with the voice of Heine. Many of his criticisms, like his articles on Rabelais and Ben Jonson, show his width of sympathy, but are addressed to an unlettered public to whom he has to introduce these authors. His praises of Blake, Browning, Whitman, and Meredith, are those of a poet and enthusiast; and, if not sharply critical, they were in most cases prescient, being proclaimed well in advance of the public taste or approval. Thomson's chief adventure in 'prose poetry,' *A Lady of Sorrow*, has been alluded to already and is in temper close allied to his great poem.

III

Unlike Thomson, the Hon. Roden Berkeley Wriothesley Noel[1] (1834-94) belonged to the fortunate classes, was able to travel and read at leisure, and wanted for no opportunity of nurturing his poetic gift. Like Thomson, he has the essential store of sincerity, and a capacity for the poetical expression of real pain. But in fact he contends for the prize of fame against greater odds than had beset the struggling journalist. Roden Noel's facility, diffuseness, and heedlessness of finish are extreme. It is hit or miss with him, from poem to poem, from verse to verse, almost from line to line. He is versatile in experiment; he is not particularly imitative; and he is for ever disappointing us, agreeably and otherwise. His successes

are in curiously different kinds. *A Vision of the Desert* is a symbolic piece of noticeable power, though spun out and unequal. *The Waternymph and the Boy* is full of sensuous beauty of a rare order, and for an English poem of the period is unusually frank. Both these pieces occur in the volume called *The Red Flag* (1872). In an essay *On the Poetic Interpretation of Nature*, Roden Noel gives some clues to his own theories and ruling moods. He inclines, if not to Pantheism, still to perceiving an animate spirit in natural or at least in beautiful things ; a presence of which literary personification, and the ' pathetic fallacy ' also, are approximate recognitions, and thus not lightly to be dismissed. Roden Noel is thus, on one side of his mind, a Wordsworthian ; and he goes beyond Wordsworth, and comes nearer to Keats, in his clean and passionate acceptance of physical grace and beauty. The song of the young dancing negroes in his *Livingstone in Africa* (1874) is a happy expression of this feeling :

. . . Many a boy,
A dancing joy,
Many a mellow maid,
With fireflies in the shade,
Mingle and glide,
Appear and hide,
Here in a fairy glade :
Ebb and flow,
To a music low,
Viol, and flute and lyre,
As melody mounts higher :
With a merry will,
They touch and thrill,
Beautiful limbs of fire !

Red berries, shells,
Over bosom-dells,
And girdles of light grass,
May never hide
The youthful pride
Of beauty, ere it pass :
Yet ah ! sweet boy and lass,
Refrain, retire !
Love is a fire !
Night will pass !

Roden Noel's most passionate strain is heard in his elegies upon his boy Eric, who died at the age of five and whom he commemorates in *A Little Child's Monument* (1881). There are some forty separate poems, some simple and harrowing, some more highly wrought and speculative ; but all are the utterance of immediate grief. There is none of the common

lashing up of a sorrow which feels disloyal to itself because it cannot recover its first acuteness ; but there is an anticipation and defiance of such a mood in the future ; and this is very nobly worded in the piece entitled *The Sea shall Give up her Dead* :

> Time spake to me : ' Behold !
> I slay your dearest one !
> And with him, dead beneath the churchyard mould,
> Your living heart I bury from the sun ! '
> More scornfully he said :
> ' When you have anguished long,
> I will erase remembrance of your dead :
> You shall arise, singing an idle song,
> As you were glad again ;
> For you were glad of yore !
> New circumstance, new care, shall cause to wane
> His very image, till your eyes no more
> Behold him in the deep
> Dark mere of memory ;
> Although you peer therein, and wail and weep,
> You shall but find a vacant, smiling sky ;
> Till with faint listless wonder you espy
> Wan, withered Love, who falters there to die !

This is an instance of Roden Noel's more successful and concentrated style. It seldom holds out for long, but it is always reappearing ; and the volume, no doubt, owes part of its pathos to an imperfection, or marked inequality, of form, which contrasts with the almost unrelieved intensity of the emotion ; so that while criticism is almost silenced, Time the enemy is not. But the poet cares little for that, being honestly concerned, as the passage shows, with questioning Time on a matter of more importance than the fame of his own verses. We may single out the poems called *Dark Spring* and *Dead*, which occur in the same volume, as among the more lasting flowers of this funeral wreath. *A Little Child's Monument* is by no means one of those laments which the reader can only gravely salute, but must respectfully forbear to scrutinise. The right words often come, without study or striving, at the call of the writer's grief. Few of the lesser lyrists of the time have more of the floating essence of poetry than Roden Noel. In his volume called *Essays on Poetry and Poets* (1866) he shows his admiration for Tennyson, Browning, and Whitman.

Robert Buchanan[1] (1841-1901) is now best remembered for the verbal thrashings, already alluded to, which Rossetti and Swinburne bestowed on him in rejoinder to his article, which afterwards swelled into a pamphlet (1872), on *The Fleshly*

School of Poetry. Over this we need not tarry; 'Thomas Maitland,' as Buchanan originally signed himself, not only put himself out of court by vulgarity, but failed to hit the real defects of either of the poets he attacked. His remark, in reference to a famous sentence of Rossetti's, that 'Mr. Rossetti's "soul" *concurs* a vast deal too easily' gives his critical measure. It does not, however, give the measure of Buchanan's poetic talent, which is sometimes genuine, though it is somewhat disastrously dispersed and cheapened. Among his many volumes may be mentioned *London Poems* (1866), *White Rose and Red* (1873), and *Balder the Beautiful* (1877); and he published a number of plays and novels, which were popular. Buchanan was himself a romantic, and his *Ballad of Judas Iscariot*, in spite of a certain *falsetto* and strain, has both invention and music. The soul of Judas desperately carries the body of Judas everywhere for burial, and is everywhere refused, until at last the soul is received and forgiven by the Bridegroom, and the body is borne away in air. Such a conception, no doubt, is enough to perturb the death-mask of Dante; but there is something of a Coleridgian unearthliness in the treatment. Many other kinds Buchanan attempted—the mystical-abstract, and the Scottish idyll; but he tried his hardest in pathetic homely narrative or lyric, where his aim is

> to make
> The busy life of London musical,
> And phrase in modern song the troubled lives
> Of dwellers in the songless lanes and streets.

Of these 'city poems' one of the more ambitious is *Meg Blane*; *The Starling* and *The Bookworm* are less high-pitched and monotonous examples. The ambition was a sound one enough; and if Buchanan mostly failed, owing to over-effusiveness and insufficient workmanship, it may be remarked that no other poet has succeeded in this field. He was certainly in earnest, though he only came in sight of success.

The praise of sweetness cannot be denied to the numbers of the popular poetess, Jean Ingelow (1820-97), who first made her mark by her *Poems* of 1863, followed in 1867 by *The Story of Doom*, and in 1885, after an interval of novel-making, by a third volume. Miss Ingelow's needless trick of antique spelling spoils her best piece, *The High Tide on the Coast of Lincolnshire, 1571*, to the eye, but not to the ear; her liquid and vowelled melody is there at its best. It may, indeed, somewhat cloy the ear also with its unvarying smoothness; but *Persephone*, with

its cunning refrain-echo of the name, and some of the lyrics in the otherwise slightly mawkish *Supper at the Mill*, show Miss Ingelow to be a singer. There is the same quality and—despite Calverley's deadly skit on its wanton affectations—there is a note of passion and reality too, in *Divided*. In the volume named after its opening piece, *The Story of Doom* (a blank-verse dilation of the history of the sons of Noah), there is nothing so good as *The High Tide*. There is also some smooth music in the *Legends and Lyrics* (1858, etc.) of Adelaide Anne Procter, who was the daughter of 'Barry Cornwall,' and was admired and commended to the public by Dickens. Her most familiar poem, *A Lost Chord*, does some injustice to her gentle talent, which is better seen in *A Legend of Provence* and *A Woman's Last Word*, in spite of the comparisons which the first of them provokes with Morris and the second with Browning.

IV

The verse of Robert, first Earl of Lytton [1] (1831-91), Viceroy of India, gives the same kind of trouble to the critic as the novels of his father. Both were voluminous writers, who watered their talent down; and both left a mass of work which has the curious interest of an old fashion-plate, so clearly does it show the stages of discipleship or imitation. Time, we may fear, is too busy, and the public too careless, to sift the residue with any care. Yet the writer of *King Poppy*, and *Cintra*, and *The Dead Pope* is sure of praise from those who can discover him. Often he gives us but a glimpse of the skirt of Poetry flying round the corner; but again and again she meets us full. Lytton cannot be acquitted of frankly using the work of his contemporaries; but what are called his plagiarisms are often so obvious as to be more like inwoven quotations. The rampant parody by Swinburne, in his *Heptalogia*, of the 'fifth-rate poet' makes more than the utmost of this weakness. But Lytton borrows a poetic idea more often than an actual phrase. Browning's dead grammarian he turned into a dead botanist, who had thirsted for the whole truth about endogens and cryptogams; and he emulates the rhyming somersaults of the master. And it is not much in Lytton's favour that the moral of the poem is all his own; for the business of the world, so we are told in an enigmatical peroration, is not to 'know more' but to 'know how to *imagine* the much that it knows.' Yet the enemy, who was quick to seize on these things, has by no means the last word with 'Owen Meredith,' as Lytton signed himself.

Lytton wrote classical narratives, legends, fables, dramatic monologues, lyrics, philosophical ditties, satiric fantasies, and much besides. His style may be too diffuse for a long poem, and too little assured for a very short one. But he can tell a tale of moderate length with point and brilliance, and he has a happy vein of pathos and also of playfulness. *Only a Shaving*, which occurs in his *Fables in Song* (1873), and the *Legend of the Falcon and the Dove*, one of the pleasant interludes in the long confused romance called *Glenaveril* (1885), are examples of his felicity. In *Cintra* the rhythm is noble, the landscape is alive; yet it seems to be only landscape, until the sudden finale unmasks the real subject, in a manner that Browning indeed might have fathered, but which he would not have disowned:

The chestnuts shiver,
The olive trees
Recoil and quiver,
Stung by the breeze,
Like sleepers awaked by a swarm of bees.

Plaintive and sullen,
Penalva moans;
The torrents are swollen;
The granite bones
Of Cruzalta crackle with split pine cones.

The hills are then hidden in cloud;

All forms, alas,
That remain or flee
As the winds that pass
May their choice decree,
Stand faster far than have stood by me

The man I served
And the woman I loved.
But what if they swerved
As their faith was proved,
When a mountain can be by a mist removed?

Lytton's most remarkable volumes are perhaps *Lucile* (1860) and the posthumously published *King Poppy*. *Lucile* is a long tale in anapæstic verse, suggested by George Sand's *Lavinia*, full of passionate posturing, yet relieved by some descriptions of great charm. But it is best in the worldly-satiric passages; a modish but by no means ineffective mixture. The blank verse of the charming *King Poppy*, a fantasy with a sort of moral, is in turn mockingly pedestrian and really dignified; it is finished with all care, and echoes no other writer. But Lytton's mobile talent seems to have swerved and shied away whenever he was coming in sight of perfection.

For thirty years little noted by the public, though never unhonoured by the judges, the poetry of John Byrne Leicester Warren (1835-95), who succeeded to the title of Lord de Tabley [1] in 1887, was more widely saluted during the last decade of the century; and its rare qualities are now acknowledged, though not so easily defined. Of cheapness or weakness, of flatness or flimsiness Lord de Tabley is hardly capable; his constancy to noble form, and to an austere and often remote inspiration, are as evident as his musical and metrical gift, more studious perhaps than spontaneous, but genuine and varied; and if his lines too seldom enough chant themselves straight into the brain, but appeal rather to our sense of craftsmanship; if we are oftener met in his dramas or monodramas by the hard-wrought logic of high-pitched passion than by irresistible strokes of nature; still, this is but to say that he calls, as he would have cared, to be judged only beside great examples. It may have been unfortunate that his two Greek plays and many of his dramatic monologues should have been written mostly in blank verse. For such verse in De Tabley's hands, though never prosaic and always carefully cut and modulated, has a certain rigour; and the last quickening touch of rhythm is not always there; and his friend Tennyson was writing blank verse at the same time with a different and a more accomplished cunning. Still, De Tabley's 'Hellenica' (so to call them), if they do not strike home like some of his lyrics, have their place apart even in the rich and crowded gallery of our later Renaissance.

Warren was a reserved and elusive figure, a solitary, a scholar, a botanist of note, with much curious exact learning of sundry kinds, and with something of an inbrooding sensitive temper; a man of deep affections, but living by choice with nature and books. It was long before he published under his own name. His first volume appeared in 1859, by 'G. F. Preston'; then came several others by 'William Lancaster'; and in time (1866) *Philoctetes*, by 'M. A.,' who was at first supposed to be Matthew Arnold. This was followed by the remarkable *Orestes*, once more by 'Lancaster.' But the name of Leicester Warren now began to acquire credit. It was signed to *Rehearsals*, to *Searching the Net*, and to an elaborate but unsuccessful drama, *The Soldier of Fortune* (1876). Disappointed at his reception, the author retired into his shell and waited almost till his death before reappearing. In 1893 and 1895 he published two series of *Poems Dramatic and Lyrical*, containing verse both new and old. These established his name. *Orpheus in Thrace* followed

posthumously, and in 1903 his poems were 'collected,' though not completely.

Lord de Tabley studied not only Tennyson, who appealed to him more than any other poet, but also Browning and Swinburne. Yet his way of studying his contemporaries was different from that of Lytton's, and he remains an independent artist. When he writes of

> the great goblin moth, who bears
> Between his wings the ruined eyes of death,

he is using a Tennysonian mode, but his own vision; he is the naturalist inspired; he has looked hard into the dim blank eyeholes on the thorax of *Acherontia Atropos*. Again, in the *Hymn to Astarte*, and in some choruses of *Orestes*, there are cadences which had first sounded in *Atalanta in Calydon*; but then they are made new, like this:

> Locked in blind heaven aloof,
> The gods are grey and dead.
> Worn is the old world's woof,
> Weary the sun's bright head.
> The sea is out of tune,
> And sick the silver moon.

The exploration of strange places of the soul through the medium of dramatic monologue is carried far by Browning; but De Tabley does not lag behind him in *The Strange Parable*, which is the parable of the unclean spirit. The possessed man, now at last unpossessed, relates his condition during the desolate uncomfortable time when the devil had been cast out of him and the 'seven comrades' had not yet come into him. As in De Tabley's other studies of the dreadful or the abnormal, the result may strike us as excogitated, rather than as the fruit of the highest imagination; but of his power there is no question, nor of his control over the poetic instrument.

The author of *The Flora of Cheshire*, his native county, De Tabley has been justly praised for his precise and imaginative notation of flowers, birds, and other natural things. He pays tribute to the 'botanical accuracy' of Matthew Arnold: 'I certainly trust him, though very few of the rest.' The 'rathe sorrel reddest of spring's crew,' the 'heath-spike's bells like sand,' the 'deep cinereous heather,' 'the speckled starling perched upon the short-eared sheep,' the 'froth-fly' with 'his liquid nest,' and the ladybird (which gets a whole poem) give a minute rich colouring to De Tabley's page. Even the wireworm and the weevil, the dodder and the 'marestail in all nosegays

undesired,' figure also, but never unpoetically. 'He is Faunus!' exclaimed Tennyson, 'he is a woodland creature.'

Philoctetes, for all its noble opening, for all the dignity and accomplishment alike of chorus and dialogue, and for all the originality of its idea, does not so often break out, or break down, into living or dramatic speech as its successor *Orestes* :

> Nay, in God's name, I will put off this power:
> Get me a little wood-lodge, and mope there,
> Teaze wool and creep, correct one serving-maid,
> And creep down to Larissa once a-year
> To get me a new girdle, and taste a cup,
> At my son's palace-gate.

So cries Dyseris, this mother of the young Orestes, whom she has kept in leading-strings, and whose death is plotted by her paramour Simus. This Larissæan Orestes, who is nothing akin to the son of Agamemnon, is the centre of a well-conceived and somewhat intricate tragic plot. At first an unpromising boy, cowed by his mother, he grows into a kingly man, slaying first his intending assassin and then himself. The writing is more Elizabethan than Greek in style, with touches of the 'spasmodic'; and in the choruses (as in De Tabley's odes *Circe* and *The Eleusinian Chant*) it aims sometimes at grandeur, sometimes at splendour or richness, and comes very near to attaining both. There are also many dramatic monologues, such as *Ariadne* and *Niobe*, *Ahasuerus* and *Jael*; they are equally well planned out, but there is something of the ice-house in them in spite of their show of flame and passion.

De Tabley succeeds best in lyric; and his shortest poems, often written in very short lines, are among his most musical. He is an accomplished inventor of tunes, and a highly skilled executant. He speaks more to the heart, he has a more direct and happy rightness, in these poems of less compass and ambition. His title-deeds are found in verses like *A Leave-Taking*, *Nuptial Song*, *A Song of Dust*, *Serenade*, or *Echo, Cloud, and Breeze*. His music is usually of the solemn, lingering, and melancholy sort :

> Kneel not and leave me; mirth is in its grave.
> True friend, sweet words were ours, sweet words decay.
> Believe, the perfume once this violet gave
> Lives—lives no more, though mute tears answer nay.
> Break off delay!

Some of the best of the briefer poems, like *A Dirge of Day* and *Sorrow Invincible*, come in the last volume of all, headed by

Orpheus in Thrace, and show that Lord de Tabley, like Tennyson, sang to the end, and sang even better near the end. Another strain is heard in the difficult stirring measure of *Napoleon the Great*; it is suggested by *The Battle of the Baltic*, and is sustained for over a hundred lines.

V

The *Verses Written in India* by Sir Alfred Comyn Lyall (1835-1911) were privately circulated before their publication in 1889; his *Asiatic Studies* (1882) in prose had begun to appear in magazines ten years earlier. An eminent administrator and scholar, Lyall had a rare perception of the Indian, and also of the Anglo-Indian, point of view; and the matter of most of his poetry is the eternal clash of East and West. He makes us feel how we are regarded in India, and also why there we remain. He had been through the Mutiny, under arms, and had entered Delhi soon after its capture. The visitor, passing through the Kashmir Gate, near the 'glacis' and the 'Moree battlement,' under the heavy sunshine or the bleaching moonlight, into the open space where the city ends and the 'civil lines' begin, finds himself in one of the most deeply moving spots in the world. It was here, too, that the poet found himself again, in more peaceful days;

> North, was the garden where Nicholson slept,
> South, was the sweep of a ruined wall.

It is the scene of *Badminton*, where the 'Musalmán, civil and mild,' spake a great curse in his heart as he watched the demoiselles and their shuttlecocks. Near by, young Indians now play English hockey. The poem, which is only twelve lines, is one of the two entitled *Studies in Delhi, 1876*. The other, *The Hindu Ascetic*, is in different mood: a few odd centuries of foreign conquest are to the dreamer but as a passing wave in the eternal flow of thought and silence. A similar idea is seen in the *Meditations of a Hindu Prince*; which, like the truly great metaphysical lyric *Siva*, owes something in its tune and language to the poet of *Hertha*. But these Swinburnian echoes are not amiss; and the measures of *Dolores* is by no means frivolously parodied in *The Land of Regrets*. The dramatic monologues, like *The Pindaree* and *A Rajput Chief of the Old School*, remind us more of Browning's simpler and more forthright work, but are in no sense imitations. In the most familiar of Lyall's pieces, *Theology in Extremis*, as in

the admirable lines *Retrospection*, the speakers are British. *Theology in Extremis*—which really exhibits no-theology *in extremis*—cannot be read without exciting a vehement gust of racial pride ; and it is one of those uncommon fundamental poems which drive the reader to ask what he himself would have done under the circumstances—would he, to save his life from the fanatic, have disowned the old faith in which he does *not* believe ? Let us hope not. The negligent, Thackerayan language and measure complete the effect. Lyall's form and finish, at their best, are very good, while it is easy to see in what studios he has worked. Amongst his masters is to be included Tennyson, his study of whom (1902) is in the tone of a discriminating friend and admirer. Lyall published other books of value, biographical and historical, some of them within the present century ; but, unluckily, no more verse.

A lesser poet than Lyall or FitzGerald adventured on a greater Oriental theme. Sir Edwin Arnold (1832-1904) was inspired by the history of Gotama, the Buddha. A public servant, who had seen the Mutiny and was yet in deep sympathy with the Indian genius, Arnold put much elaborate study and reading into his most popular book, *The Light of Asia, or, The Great Renunciation* (1879), and also into his versions from the Sanskrit, such as *The Indian Song of Songs* (1875), which contains some happy and melodious measures. *The Light of Asia* chronicles the life, labours, and teaching of the Buddha, though it stops short of his death, a subject so nobly treated by many an Eastern sculptor. There is in the poem some excess of lore and hard words, and an admixture of love-poetry of a too modern stamp ; and also a good deal of legendary accretion which is not at all on the sublime level of the original story. But the blank verse, Tennysonian in stamp, is smooth and suave enough if undistinguished ; the pageantry is learned, often splendid, never common or mean ; and the luminous heights of the Buddha's wisdom, if not exactly ascended, are at least beheld by the poet ; much of his message is told ; his musings and struggles, his humanity and kindness, are worthily presented ; and the ardours and solitudes of the scenery are drawn from Sir Edwin Arnold's own experience. We still lack a great poem, and it is hard to think even of a good short one, on the creed of self-liberation ; so that *The Light of Asia* ought not to suffer too much for its popular quality ; for it introduced many readers to a great religion. Sir Edwin Arnold wrote much else—an earlier volume, *Griselda* (1856), may be named ; and also a play, *Adzuma, or, The Japanese Wife* (1893) ; which

is based upon a tragic story of old Japan, and delicately written.

It is superfluous now for the critic to jest against the former popularity and copious verse of Sir Lewis Morris (1833-1907), but he may find himself wondering, as he turns over *Songs of Two Worlds* (1872-5), *The Epic of Hades* (1876-7), or *Gwen* (1879), why they are now so hard to read. They all have considerable gloss and finish, of a sort ; they have no particular trick or mannerism, their intention is unfailingly virtuous ; the subjects are often good ; Sir Lewis Morris is patriotic, philanthropic, optimistic, or Hellenic, with the best will in the world ; and he takes much trouble to be poetical. *The Epic of Hades*, his best known work, is still his best ; and its peroration (' For while a youth is lost in soaring thought ' . . . ' still the world is young '), if it has not much to do with the tales of Phædra or Marsyas, is in an excellent strain and easy to remember. It all appealed to the large public for whom Tennyson, at his best was, in spite of his acknowledged pre-eminence, in truth too abstruse—though they would never say so—and who preferred an easy sort of pseudo-Tennyson. And they got him. Sir Lewis Morris was ' a felt need ' ; and so he served his generation, providing for it a banquet of the obvious, neither ill-dressed nor lacking in variety, as the press commendations of the time duly show ; of these an anthology can be seen at the end of his collected works. The more successful verse of Alfred Austin (1835-1913), Tennyson's successor in the Laureateship, was produced after 1880, and falls beyond our limits ; but he had written much, chiefly in a borrowed satiric vein, before that date ; and, at the best, his poetical gift is of the most temperate kind. There is more stuff and scholarship in the careful, ambitious studio-poetry of Augusta Webster—*A Woman Sold* (1867), *Portraits* (1870)—who wrote many tragedies, lyrics, and dramatic monologues, and translated the *Prometheus* and *Medea*. Not Tennyson but Browning is her chief inspirer, in work like *The Inventor* and the *Manuscript of St. Alexius* ; but why should any one write or read even the most spirited *pastiches* of Browning ? There is something much more pleasing and natural in the rendering of the Chinese story, *Yu-pe-Ya's Lute* (1874), which enters a field little explored by English poets.

VI

Few of our older public schools, with all their sins, but have managed to shelter some true humanist and man of letters, who has left behind him a little good verse, and a name outliving the race of pupils that he inspired. Such, in a later generation, were Thomas Edward Brown of Clifton and Augustus Henry Beesly of Marlborough; and such was William Johnson, latterly William Johnson Cory[1] (1823-92), of Eton, the author of *Ionica*. In its final shape, this volume appeared in 1891; but the flower of it was already in the first issue of 1858, the second (1877) being less remarkable. Cory was a devoted and quickening teacher, both of classics and history; and, though lacking in some of the stiff professional virtues, was full of a delicate sympathy with youth, which is apparent both in his verse and in his admirable letters. A few of his lyrics are close and almost ideal translations from the Anthology, such as the well-known *Heraclitus*; others are conceived in its spirit, like the *Invocation* to 'dear divine Comatas,' and the *Dirge* on love unreturned, 'the stricken Anteros.' The beautiful *Amaturus* is more modern in feeling, and is only half-playful. Cory's perfect things are very few; but in all his work there is the breath of poetry, and the note of regret and aspiration. He also mused in accomplished Greek verse. He thought himself a somewhat frustrated and ineffectual person; but it was just this feeling that sang in his lines. He was a musician too, and one passage in his letters gives the note of his own poetry:

> Listening to pathetic songs I rebel against the death of those who sang them in old times; the makers of those melodies are my unknown brethren; all others who speak in what we call words fail to let me know them thoroughly; music is the only communion of hearts, and it makes one's heart feel hopelessly empty.

Another snatch of Cory's prose may be given in illustration of his temper; he is standing amongst the tombs in Westminster Abbey,

> implicitly believing that the irrecoverable souls were as fair as the marbles say they were, longing to know them, pitying them for being dead, pitying their kinsfolk who lost them so long ago. . . . Then and there do I love my countrymen, and think them all kind, all worthy of immortality.

Cory also published a noticeable, but little noticed, *Guide to Modern English History from 1815 to 1835* (part i., 1880;

part ii., 1882). It is not written in any of the regular styles ; it is something between disquisition and narrative ; the actual course of facts it assumes to be known, rather than relates ; or else it relates them by the method of epigram and allusion. It is chiefly political, dealing with the chronicle of foreign policy, legislation, economic growth, and party change ; but there is a continual outlook into wider principles. The close oracular style, with its singular turns, reminds us at moments of Lord Acton's. Cory, for instance, analyses the history of the Whig temper in this strain, in referring to George III. :

> He thus established for his sons a rule quite incompatible with Locke's rational theory of government ; and if his sons had been as temperate, robust, and dignified as himself, there would have been nothing for the Foxites to do but to turn Republicans. The royal conscience became the ark which no one was to inspect. So long as there was such a character as George III.'s on one side, and such a character as Mr. Fox's on the other side, the great bulk of virtuous families in Britain had naturally disliked government by reason. The intellectual part of the aristocracy escaped from a hopeless position only because its antagonist, the royal conscience, became vile in the character of George IV. The original principle of the Whig party was resumed when George IV. died. It seemed to be again quite possible to take the posture of the King's servant with a resolve to be, with the King, the servant of reason.

Cory's accounts of the battle of Navarino, of the anti-slavery movement, and of the passing of the Reform Bill, are written with the same edge and vigour. There is some want of proportion in his work ; but it is rather its irregular cast, for it is neither a piece of ' research ' with document and reference, nor a popular decoction, nor easy reading—that has left his *Guide* in a kind of backwater. It ought to be saved, if only for its original stamp and for temper of grave and rational, but glowing, patriotism.

A finish of conception and form which does not always, in poetesses or poets either, accompany intensity of feeling, is conspicuous in the handful of verses bequeathed by Margaret Veley (1843-87). Some of them first appeared in the *Cornhill*, such as *A Japanese Fan* (1876), and the best were published in 1888 as *A Marriage of Shadows and Other Poems*, with an introduction by Leslie Stephen ; whose sentence, that ' she was never satisfied until she had gained all possible clearness of definition in her thought,' hits on one of Miss Veley's chief excellences. Now and then, in her saddest and most courageous pieces, she cuts sharper and deeper than Tennyson or Browning.

This is a good deal to say ; but it is borne out by a poem like *First or Last?—A Wife to her Husband*. The dying wife not only accepts but welcomes the husband's 'hopeless creed' that the parting is final ; the last kiss (or is it after all the first ?) is the 'aloe-flower of perfect love.' And the believers have not the best of it :

> They can but give a scanty dole
> Out of a life made safe in heaven,
> While I am sovereign o'er the whole,
> I can give all—and all is given !

The poem, however, ends by asking the eternal question once more. This strain, with variations, runs through others, such as the longer *Marriage of Shadows* ; there is the same effort to adjust mortal passion, with a kind of gaiety, to the prospect of disappearance and oblivion. Perhaps Miss Veley succeeds best when the strain is, at least superficially, lightened, and attention is called away by her extreme deftness of playful phrase and cadence. *A Japanese Fan*, which has got into the anthologies, is a perfect example of the dramatic monologue, telling with a smile the story of a whole bitter dead love-affair, to a little dance-measure :

> This is tragic ! Are you laughing ?
> So am I !
> Let us go—the clouds have vanished
> From the sky.
> Yes, and you 'll forget this folly ?
> Time it ceased,
> For you do not understand me
> In the least.
> You have smiled and sighed politely
> Quite at ease,—
> And my story might as well be
> Japanese !

The same quality, more diffused, is found in *A Lutanist*, *A Game of Piquet*, and *Private Theatricals*. In all these a man is supposed to be speaking, and the poetess gets into his skin without the usual difficulties.

Another poet, now little heeded, whose best work is marked by epigrammatic neatness, and whose lyric is often of much beauty and finish, is Mortimer Collins (1827-76), whose most popular lines, *The Positivists*, occur in his Aristophanic satire, *The British Birds* (1872), and are good work with a pea-shooter. Collins also produced *Idyls and Rhymes* (1855), *Summer Songs* (1860), and other volumes. Some of his little love-poems

'to F. C.' have a classical concentration and elegance; nor is Eros absent:

> So stir the fire and pour the wine
> And let those sea-green eyes divine
> Pour their love-madness into mine;
> I don't care whether
> 'Tis snow or sun or rain or shine
> If we 're together.

Three professor-poets may now be referred to. The *Hannibal* (1873) of John Nichol (1833-94) is a drama carefully polished, and based on the authorities. It suffers from the apparent assumption—which Nichol was far too well-instructed to make——that to be classical is to be cold. Nor was Nichol cold; in fact his critical writing is sometimes over-angry, but is also concise and courageous, as his short volumes on *Byron* (1880) and on *Carlyle* (1892) are enough to prove. Nichol never gave his full measure in print; for more than a quarter of a century he was Professor of English Literature at Glasgow, kindling enthusiasm and never delivering himself tamely. He was a contemporary and friend of Swinburne, who addressed to him two moving and beautiful sonnets, wherein 'the starry spirit of Dobell,' another friend of Nichol's, is also honoured.

Francis Turner Palgrave (1824-97), who has nurtured the poetic taste of two generations by his *Golden Treasury of the Best Songs and Lyrical Poems in the English Language* (first published in 1861) was himself an accomplished worker at poetry; and even if his lyrics will scarcely pass his own test, his *Visions of England* (1881) are spaciously planned, and are a new kind of historical poem. They are

> single lyrical pictures of such leading or typical characters and scenes in English history, and only such, as seem to me amenable to strictly poetical treatment. Poetry, and not history, has, hence, been my first and last aim; or, perhaps I might define it, history for poetry's sake.

The sentence is a good instance of Palgrave's critical style; the poems, of which the subjects range from the battle of Hastings to Zutphen, and from Charles Edward to Cawnpore, are never common or unworthy; and they are nobly animated; and still they are in the nature of studio-work. Palgrave's sense of construction, as well his tact in selection—which has long been past praising—is seen in the *Golden Treasury* itself, which forms, and is meant to form, a concerted whole. The grouping of the chosen lyrics, and the transitions between the groups, are subtly and not mechanically planned, and the

notes are those of a poet. Palgrave's inclusion of a few flatter or cheaper pieces only throws into relief his general skill; and in a later edition he repaired, if insufficiently, his curious neglect of Blake. The 'second series' of the *Golden Treasury*, which includes writers of Palgrave's own time, is not all such pure gold as it would have been had he lived at the distance of to-day; and his *Treasury of Sacred Song* (1889) imposed on him yet other difficulties. *Chrysomela*, his anthology from Herrick, shows his characteristic taste once more. Palgrave was Professor of Poetry at Oxford from 1887 to 1895; he wrote critical essays, amongst which his *Landscape in Poetry* (1897) well shows his poetic feeling and poetic learning. Palgrave's brother, William Gifford, the Oriental traveller, has been mentioned before (Ch. XII.); the father, Sir Francis Palgrave (1788-1861) was one of the most learned historians and investigators of the older school.

An earlier patriot-poet, also in his time Professor of Poetry at Oxford (who gave excellent racy discourses on dialect verse and on the *Dream of Gerontius*), Sir Francis Hastings Doyle (1810-88), had more lyrical heat and impetus in him than Palgrave. His general manner is suggestive of Scott, Aytoun, and Macaulay; and a little more technical power would have ranked a few of his chants with the best of theirs. Doyle wrote on classical subjects in *Gythia* and *The Old Age of Sophocles*, and an ode on *The Duke's Funeral*; but his real field is heroic fighting, rescue, and adventure. In two of his best pieces, *The Red Thread of Honour* and *A Private of the Buffs*, the scene is Oriental; and the latter, in its own style, is a fitting pendant to Lyall's *Theology in Extremis*, and is on a similar theme. *The Return of the Guards* (1866) is in the same strain, and in an original metre; *The Fusiliers' Dog* is on a simple subject, very difficult to treat so well as Doyle treats it. But his higher strain is perhaps heard clearest in *The Saving of the Colours*, written in honour of the officers Coghill and Melvill:

> For now, forgetting that wild ride, forgetful of all pain,
> High among those who have not lived, who have not died in vain,
> By strange stars watched, they sleep afar, within some nameless glen,
> Beyond the tumult and the noise, beyond the praise of men.

Another classical scholar, who wrote in quite another strain, Frederic William Henry Myers (1843-1901), began his career as a poet with a Cambridge prize poem on *St. Paul* (1867), which caught the general ear, largely owing to the clever and taking jingle of its rhymes. Myers developed a genuine technical skill in metre; but his tunes, whether it be something mannered

in their iteration, or something mawkish in the sentiment embodied, do not always please. His *Love and Faith* contains temptations to a deadly parody. But in his *Poems* (1870) and his *The Renewal of Youth and Other Poems* (1882) are to be found things like *Simmenthal* and *Stanzas on Shelley*, both wonderfully pictorial and resonant. Myers can sometimes round a short-lined stanza with the best. There is something of Christopher Smart himself in the lines *On an Invalid*:

> But when the mounting treble shakes,
> When with a noise the anthem wakes
> A song forgetting sin,—
> Thro' all her pipes the organ peals,
> With all her voice at last reveals
> The storm of praise within.

The Renewal of Youth is a metaphysical poem in ringing couplets on the question of the soul's immortality, and is connected with Myers's interest in the labours of the Society for Psychical Research; and so, in another way, is his essay on the ancient Greek oracles, which came out in the collection, by various hands, entitled *Hellenica*. But of more concern to literature are some of his classical essays, notably one on Virgil, and his short book on Wordsworth (1881). Myers's prose is often pitched too high, but now and then contains a burst of rich poetic imagery.

VII

To turn to the Irish poets.[1] The founding of *The Nation* newspaper in 1842 at once quickened the poetic instinct which writers like Jeremiah Callanan, rather than writers like Thomas Moore, had kept alive. Many verses, of which a few still stand the test, appeared in its pages; but its true service to the Irish muse was deferred and indirect, and is found in the revival of a much later day. The primary aim of Thomas Davis, Charles Gavan Duffy, and their band was political, in the larger sense of the term, and not literary. The poets of *The Nation* were inspired less by Gaelic legend, which it was left for Sir Samuel Ferguson truly to recover, than by Irish song and tune, and by the heroic episodes of Ireland during historical times. The life of Davis (1814-45) was a short one, and his connexion with *The Nation* fell during the last three years of his life; but he, if any one man, was the soul of Ireland and the embodiment of her renaissance. Poetry for Davis was but one of many implements; his prose is ardent and highly coloured, and surer than his verse. In *The Sack of Baltimore* or *The Irish*

Hurrah his manner is rhetorical and English. But in his best piece, the *Lament for Eoghan Ruadh* [Owen Roe] *O'Neill*, there is the fierce note of a tribal passion which the lapse of two centuries has only heightened; while in *The Girl of Dunbwy* and *Maire Bhán a Stóir* ('fair Mary, my treasure') there is again the native ring. Davis won a great audience by fitting more or less hasty lines to good wandering Irish airs. He published his work in this scattered fashion; but his *National and Historical Ballads, Songs, and Poems* have been gathered up and often reprinted. He did not live to develop the lighter and more roguish strain which would have delighted Burns and which is represented in *O! the Marriage*:

We meet in the market and fair—
We meet in the morning and night—
He sits on the half of my chair,
And my people are wild with delight.
Yet I long through the winter to skim,
Though Eoghan longs more, I can see,
When I will be married to him,
And he will be married to me.
Then O! the marriage, the marriage,
With love and *mo bhuachaill* [=my boy] for me,
The ladies that ride in a carriage
Might envy my marriage to me.

The Nation sheltered many fervent and facile writers of verse, but their work is mostly ephemeral, owing to their lack of formal training and of artistic standard. Duffy's historic ballads, the declamatory *Irish Reaper's Harvest Hymn* of John Keegan, and the copious verses of Thomas D'Arcy McGee, are mostly documents rather than poetry. The work of Edward Walsh, who though a contributor to the paper belongs to an older school, is safer, because the best of it consists of translation or paraphrase from the Irish. Walsh's form, too, is nicer than that of the political writers. *Mo Craoibhin Cno* ('My cluster of nuts,' that is, 'My dark-brown maid'), and *From the Cold Sod that 's o'er You*, and *The Dawning of the Day* are happy examples of Walsh's gift. His *Irish Popular Songs* were collected in 1847. But two Irish poets of this period outshine and outlast the others; these are James Clarence Mangan and Sir Samuel Ferguson.

James Clarence Mangan (1803-49) was a waif, 'kept out of public life,' it has been remarked, 'by a passion for opium and rum'; a linguist and scholar, with a vein of fooling which now drops into the trivial and now rises into grotesque humour. He liked the horrors of Teutonic romance, and wrote some

trashy tales in the same taste. He also liked Maturin, and in one story actually resuscitates Melmoth the Wanderer. He poured out lurid Byronic-Oriental verse, like *The Karamanian Exile*, which has lost its interest. His good things are not many, but they are very good, and sometimes they are his own and sometimes they are founded on Irish originals. *Dark Rosaleen* is one of the few consummate lyrics written by an Irish hand in the English language for the Irish national cause. There is something of the same metrical deftness in *A Vision of Connaught in the Thirteenth Century*. In *O'Hussey's Ode to the Maguire* the form is less excellent, but the vehement tune and feeling carry it through. Mangan, despite his broken life, had interludes of good spirits and is not always fierce and exalted. *Prince Alfred's Itinerary*, from the Irish, is full of the cheery piety and precise imagery which so often distinguish the old poets from the moderns. There is no abstract anger or indefinite wailing in this :

> I found besides, from Ara to Glea,
> In the broad rich country of Ossorie,
> Sweet fruits, good laws for all and each,
> Good chess players, men of truthful speech.

But in most of Mangan's personal poems, like *Siberia* or *The Nameless One*, the desperate mood returns, the poet consoling himself by some curious, uncommonplace rhyme or twist of language.

VIII

I have already suggested (Ch. x.) that the right measure and style for translating Homer were hit upon by Sir Samuel Ferguson (1810-86), the chief Irish poet of this period. Ferguson was a Gaelic scholar and antiquary of very wide range, a dignified patriot, and a supporter of Young Ireland. But in middle life he left politics and gave himself to learning and poetry : the transition is marked by his carelessly shapen but impassioned *Lament for Thomas Davis*. Already, in his youth, he had produced the popular *Forging of the Anchor*, and also *The Fairy Thorn*, with its strain of Shelley-like music, to which he was not often to return :

> But solemn is the silence of the silvery haze
> That drinks away their voices in echoless repose,
> And dreamily the evening has still'd the haunted braes,
> And dreamier the gloaming grows.

These and other pieces of the same date were afterwards

included in *Lays of the Western Gael* (1865), the book which established Ferguson's fame as a transfuser of ancient Irish legend into English verse. His work in this field ranges from actual translation of the lyric or epic originals to a free poetic treatment which carefully respects the stories. *The Tain-Quest* and *The Healing of Conall Carnach* are the best of the epical poems in this volume; but there is also the ballad on *The Welshmen of Tirawley*, admired by Swinburne, with its magnificent, original, and vindictive metre. The Welshmen, savagely blinded by their foes, patiently rear up a child of the culprit family to be the scourge of his own kindred. This scheme of vengeance is remote from anything ever dreamed of by the simpler though not less ferocious ballad Muse of Great Britain. Ferguson was encouraged to attempt the full-dress, full-length epic; his *Congal* appeared in 1872, and a volume containing *Conary* and *The Naming of Cuchullin* in 1880. There, too, is *Deirdre's Lament for the Sons of Usnach*, 'from the Irish,' a really noble and sustained lyric:

> The falcons of the wood are flown,
> And I am left alone—alone—
> Dig the grave both deep and wide
> And let us slumber side by side.

Ferguson does not fail in tenderness; nor in pleasant grace and cheerfulness either, as his version called *The Fair Hills of Ireland* testifies; but his true achievement was to *nerve* the poetry of Ireland, too prone to the luxury of grief, by a poetic reproduction of her heroic and tragic legends. He can be heedless and rugged; he can slip, impatiently, into common phraseology; and his frequent want of finish has caused him to be slighted by some English critics, just as naturally as his national service has led some of his own countrymen to praise him for the wrong things. But he has sincerity and strength, and again and again he has the poetic accent. At his best he moves on the highest level of Scott, not to speak of Macaulay; is much more than a vigorous versifying scholar; and, like Scott, he can rise to something rarer altogether. A few lines from his *Congal* will show his regular narrative manner; a gigantic figure fills the landscape:

> . . . And—haply, being a citizen just 'scaped from some disease
> That long has held him sick indoors, now, in the brine-fresh breeze,
> Health-salted, bathes; and says, the while he breathes reviving bliss,
> 'I am not good enough, O God, nor pure enough for this!'—
> Such seemed its hues. His feet were set in fields of waving grain;
> His head, above, obscured the sun: all round the leafy plain

Blackbird and thrush piped loud acclaims ; in middle-air, breast-high,
The lark shrill carolled ; overhead, and half-way up the sky,
Sailed the far eagle : from his knees, down dale and grassy steep,
Thronged the dun, mighty upland droves, and mountain-mottling sheep,
And by the river-margins green, and o'er the thymy meads
Before his feet careered, at large, the slim-knee'd, slender steeds.

This has not the ease or rapidity of Homer ; the clots of consonants in the ' spondees ' give trouble, as in English they always must ; but it is a roomy style and metre, full of dignity.

The nicest craftsman among the Irish poets was William Allingham [1] (1824-89), whose first book of *Poems*, appearing in 1850, was followed by some ten others ; but he finally sifted into six thin volumes all that he thought worth saving. The titles of these are *Flower Pieces*, *Laurence Bloomfield*, *Thought and Word*, *Blackberries*, *Life and Phantasy*, and *Irish Songs and Poems*. Allingham forms a link between the Irish singers and his ' pre-Raphaelite ' friends, Rossetti, Millais, and Arthur Hughes, who illustrated some of his works. Romantic pieces like *Saint Margaret's Eve*, with its double refrain, and *The Maids of Elfin-Mere*, though anything but *pastiches*, do not show the real Allingham. He excels above all in simple lyric, and in ' songs of innocence.' His fairy poems, such as the favourite ' Up the airy mountain ' and *Two Fairies in a Garden*, might well be headed by Hughes's design to *Prince Brightkin* of the pixies dancing on their round hilltop under the rounded moon. Allingham's little creatures are harmless and gay, somewhat puckish, seldom mysterious. Others too of his poems are infantine in the best sense of the word. The tunes seem to be unsought. ' Four ducks in a pond,' *Robin Redbreast*, and *Half-Waking* have a little of Blake in them and sometimes more of Stevenson :

In market or church,
Graveyard or dance,
When they came without search,
Were found as by chance.

Their spirit has been hailed by later Irish singers. Allingham can give a complete impression in brief, like the Japanese poets ; here is one, in twenty-one syllables :

A sunset's mounded cloud ;
A diamond evening star ;
Sad blue hills afar ;
Love in his shroud.

Indeed, the less he amplifies and elaborates the better he is. A cunning simplicity and sure melody, making much of the

musical proper names, *Coolmore*, *Slieveleague*, or *Asaroe*, mark his local or legendary poems, mostly written in long rhymed measures. *The Winding Banks of Erne, or, The Emigrant's Adieu to Ballyshannon*, 'is sung to-day,' we are told, 'by wandering singers who never heard of Allingham, and has become a classic lament among his own people.' Belashanny, or Ballyshannon, county Donegal, was his birthplace. The beautiful *Abbot of Inisfalen*, however, is of rarer quality. Allingham had a true taste for popular poetry, and his selection of examples in his *Ballad Book* is admirable.

He also wrote some remarkable verse which is scarcely poetry at all. His novel *Laurence Bloomfield, or, Rich and Poor in Ireland* (1862-3), written in impenitent, more than Crabbe-like, doggerel couplets, is photographic in method, and moved Turgénev to say, after reading it, that he had 'never understood Ireland before.' The Ribbonmen's meeting, the desolate seat of the bankrupt and raffish landlord, and the home, with its tasteless furniture, of the wicked agent, are described with unexpected power. Allingham for the greater part of his life was in the customs service in Ireland, and spoke from observation. In 1870 he came to London and afterwards edited *Fraser's Magazine* for some years. His close acquaintance with Carlyle, Tennyson, and other men of letters is on record in his *Diary*. His prose is pleasant and pensive, especially the *Rambles by Patricius Walker*, in which Allingham talks at length of Swift, or Scott, or Herrick, as he tramps their countryside. He also must have been, in 1869, one of the first English writers to criticise Baudelaire; who shocks the clean-minded Irish gentleman, but extorts some praises from the artist.

Another and somewhat older Irish writer, Aubrey Thomas de Vere [1] (1814-1902), unites, though in another fashion than Allingham's, the poetry of the two countries. The son of Sir Aubrey de Vere, who was himself an admirable maker of sonnets, he too is a sworn Wordsworthian, and his verse shows his discipleship both in its workmanship and in its pervading austerity and clearness of spirit. He was also a friend of Tennyson and Sir Henry Taylor, and the elder and graver strain of thought predominates in his work; there is not much of the free rapture, and none of the defiance, of a later school. Aubrey de Vere, however, was an Irishman, a patriot, and a fighter, and like Ferguson a reviver of the old national legends. His conversion in 1851 to the Roman Church enhanced an interest in mediæval and religious themes, of which his *Legends of St. Patrick* (1872) are the principal fruit. Some of

these are in blank verse ; but Aubrey de Vere manages rhymed measures with more originality ; and pieces like *Saint Patrick at Tara*, with their *Christabel* or *Rose Mary* tune, have a real warmth and beauty. Other poems, to be found in his *Irish Odes*, such as *The Music of the Future* or *The Foundation of an Irish University*, reveal yet other enthusiasms. Aubrey de Vere's sonnets on *St. Cuthbert* and on *The Sun-God*, and several addressed to Wordsworth, show great skill, and an invariable nobility of temper. He also wrote Hellenics, plaintive Irish songs, and many other kinds of verse, as well as some critical prose of fastidious quality. Aubrey de Vere moves on a kind of table-land, with few noticeable summits, and sometimes rather out of hearing of the human earth ; the effect is usually less that of poetry pure and simple than of rigorous artistic discipline and fervent poetical intention.

IX

Dialect poetry in English has an odd precarious footing in letters, because the supposed speakers and hearers of it are of the peasant race, which, unlike that of Scotland or Ireland or Wales, has actually little sense for letters. Who, then, is to be the reader ? If you write for the educated, you may give them only a curious and condescending kind of pleasure at seeing the country speech so well imitated ; if for the countryman himself, you may have to go beneath the levels of poetry in order to please him. *The Northern Farmer* is a feat, and captured, it is said, both these publics ; but it is hard to keep the strain up long. Our most successful and interesting poet of this order (south of Tweed of course) is the singular William Barnes [1] (1801-86), schoolmaster, learned amateur philologist, pure-Saxon-English-monger, and author of three series (1844, 1859, 1862) of *Poems of Rural Life in the Dorset Dialect*, of which the second instalment was entitled *Hwomely Rhymes*. These works, we hear, and may well believe, fulfilled the test of delighting the population for whom and concerning whom they were composed, when Barnes went about reading them aloud to audiences. I have heard them recited, by another native of his county, to an academic party, which was struck by their lightness of movement and lively buoyancy ; but, sophisticated beings that we were, we found our chief pleasure in thinking how much they must have pleased those who followed them without hindrance, in point of utterance and vocabulary or of 'speech and word-stock,' as the theorising poet himself might

have called it. To read them silently is much easier, and inspires respect, and pleasure too, and begets no sense of monotony. Their topics do not want for variety. There are little eclogues like *A Bit o' Sly Coorten*, one of the favourites ; ditties on flowers, such as the pretty *Clote* (water-lily) ; simple devout pieces ; many rustic love-poems, relating the courtship at the stile or in the hayfield ; descriptions of jaunts, dances, and festivals, with the right costume, etiquette, and folklore ; and many other pictures from the same world. They have a pure cheerful note, like that of Barnes's favourite singer, the blackbird :

> Ov all the birds upon the wing
> Between the zunny show'rs o' spring,—
> Vor all the lark, a-swingèn high,
> Mid zing sweet ditties to the sky,
> An' sparrows, clust'rèn roun' the bough,
> Mid chatter to the men at plough,—
> The blackbird, whisslèn in among
> The boughs, do sing the gayest song.

Such lines are no bad example of Barnes's melody ; at other times the verse itself is nearer to song, as in *Blackmwore Maidens* or in *Jessie Lee* ; he has a happy turn for a refrain ; little depth of music, but a steady enough surface ripple of it, rather soothing and pleasant, like the gentle buzzing and burring of the Western speech itself ; all much the same to the ear, whether you have a little more of it or a good deal less. His tact is shown in avoiding a too literary style which cries out against the dialect that cannot disguise it. This danger is sometimes at hand :

> The sheädeless darkness o' the night
> Can never blind my memory's zight ;

translate into 'shadeless' and 'sight,' and the ambitiousness is evident ; and we turn for the contrast to

> An' there the jeints o' beef did stand,
> Lik' cliffs o' rock, in goodly row ;

or to the picture of the wagon-horses, which has a touch of Burns, each couplet containing a miniature :

> An' champèn *Vi'let*, sprack an' light,
> That foam'd an' pull'd wi' all her might ;
> An' *Whitevoot*, leäzy in the treäce,
> Wi' cunnèn looks an' snow-white feäce ;
> Bezides a bay woone, short-tail *Jack*,
> That wer a treäce-hoss or a hack.

The verse that Barnes wrote in ordinary English has the same qualities, and often strikes home, as in *The Wind at the Door*; it is both piercing and familiar. We may legitimately, and indeed must, think away the spelling of his dialect verse in order to get the same effect, and to do it full justice. But whatever its exact rank in literature, there is no doubt that this kind of work ought to be done for every dialect that is worthy of such treatment, so as to save for record some little bit of joyous and forgotten life; and well if it is done as aptly as Barnes can do it; but for the South and West country, at any rate, there has been so far only one Barnes.

Nor are his readers, like those of most dialectal writers, confined to his own shire. Few but those in whose ears the Lancashire speech has sounded are likely to pay much heed to Edwin Waugh [1] (1817-90), who has had an immense local public of his own. Waugh was a successor to John Collier of Rochdale, or 'Tim Bobbin,' who died in 1786, and who was one of the first to practise in the native idiom and humours. Born in the same town, and originally a journeyman printer, Waugh poured out prose tales, prose sketches, and verses, which together fill eleven volumes; the prose bulking much larger than the verse, and not all the verse being in dialect. His language is pronounced to be nicely accurate; nor is it, to the ear, obtrusive, though it is quaint to the eye. There is hardly much poetry in his rhymes, though there is abundance of excellent observation and simple good feeling. Pieces like *Owd Enoch*, *Eawr* [our] *Folk*, *Jamie Raddles*, and the very popular *Come Whoam to the Childer and Me* have the stamp of true folk-ditties. Waugh published a volume of *Poems and Lancashire Songs* in 1859. Five years later appeared *Poems and Songs*, by a less-known Lancashire writer, Samuel Laycock [2] (1826-93). He is rather more minute and photographic in his descriptions than Waugh; and his *Bowton's Yard*, with its list of the dwellers in that narrow hive, may well accompany some of the pictures in *Mary Barton* or *North and South*. Lancashire humour is not commonplace, nor yet is it literary; it is sudden; and, as Henley said of Scotch wit, it 'fells you with a mace.' In another poem, Bishop Fraser asks an indignant collier the way to Bowton, a thing which everybody ought to know; and gets the reply:

> If tha conno find Bowton beawt [without] axin' off me,
> Heaw theaw knows the road to Heaven, well, aw conno just see.

X

The change of manners and temper during the reign of the Queen is, naturally enough, mirrored in the lighter kind of verse, just as it is in fiction, in reviewing, and in the essay. The voice is lowered, the rampant high spirits tame down, the handiwork becomes finer: a process that becomes plainer after the middle of the century. In the Thirties and Forties there are Bon Gaultier and Thomas Ingoldsby, in the Fifties and Sixties there are Locker-Lampson and Calverley. But these last only quicken a tradition which descends from Prior, and had been kept alive, all the while, by Praed, during the uproarious age. Thackeray practises in both kinds, but inclines to the more delicate of the two. Maginn, on whom he drew for his portrait of Captain Shandon, is to him a figure of the past. '*Maga*' always sustained the old spirit, but somewhat in a pious imitative way, like a middle-aged man going back to a feast of old schoolfellows and showing how pranks were played in former days. *Fraser's Magazine*, founded in 1830, kept up the game for a while. In 1834, even while *Sartor* was appearing in its pages, a scion of the elder stock of wags and a companion of Maginn, Francis Sylvester Mahony [1] (1804-66), began a series of humorous papers, which in 1836 were collected as *The Reliques of Father Prout*. Mahony had been, and had ceased to be, a Jesuit, but had remained a priest, and afterwards was also a press correspondent in Rome. Mystifying preludes by an imaginary editor; imaginary talks, after the manner of the *Noctes*, of 'Prout' with Scott and others; long harangues in prose, not now entertaining; verse translations, mostly doggerel, from Horace, Victor Hugo, Béranger, Filicaja; and, what are of more mark, mystifying 'originals' provided in Greek, Latin, and French for Moore's ditties and for many other things; such are Prout's principal wares. In using these languages he has a preternatural facility, and some real scholarship. 'Go where glory waits thee' is presented as one of 'Tom Moore's rogueries'—as really a translation from the song 'Va où la gloire t'invite,' composed ('I believe') by 'Françoise de Foix, Comtesse de Chateaubriand, before the battle of Pavia'; and so following. Mahony managed to persuade some people that *The Burial of Sir John Moore* was based on certain verses found in 'the appendix to the memoirs of Lally Tolendal, by his son': 'Ni le son du tambour . . .' These things, being mingled among the genuine translations, caused a pleasant confusion. Mahony's Latin versions are of

more interest than his English ones ; but his best work is still the truly melodious *Shandon Bells* and *The Groves of Blarney*. His renderings of the latter poem into his three favourite languages, printed in parallel columns, are worthy of inspection.

Crime, seasoned with the terrors of the supernatural, had been rife in the fiction of the age of Scott and Maturin. The 'satanic' element, and indeed the Devil himself, had been worked to death by the story-tellers, and that in a serious spirit. We shall still find the tale of terror flourishing, though without such nether assistance, in the pages of Dickens, Lytton, and Charlotte Brontë. Nor was the mediæval vein to be much re-explored for these purposes until the arrival of Rossetti and O'Shaughnessy, who gave new life to the lay and ballad. Meanwhile, the terror-monger had one resource left ; he could import a comic and grotesque colouring, not exactly by way of parody, but in order to deepen the impression. Of this method there is no better example than *The Ingoldsby Legends* of the Rev. Richard Harris Barham (1788-1845), the friend and biographer of Hook. Barham has the same high spirits and prankishness of fancy as Hook, with much more style and invention. The *Legends* began to appear in 1837 in *Bentley's Monthly Miscellany*, and were collected and published, in several series, from 1840 to 1847. Modern editions include some further pieces, including the pensive and tuneful lyric, *As I lay a-thynkynge, a-thynkynge, a-thynkynge*, 'the last lines of Thomas Ingoldsby.' The book is still deservedly alive and popular despite all changes of taste. 'Thomas Ingoldsby, of Tappington Everard,' in Kent, disinterred, like Chatterton, many of his legends from an 'old oak chest.' But one of the most *macabre*, the legend of Salisbury Plain which relates the story of the dead drummer, had been communicated by 'the late lamented Sir Walter Scott.' Of the 'lays,' among the most edifying are those of St. Medard, who cut the lost souls out of the fiend's bag with an oyster-knife ; of St. Gengulphus, who came together again after being hewn in pieces ; and of St. Odille, magically shut into a rock from her pursuers. But the qualities of queerness, energy, and horribleness are perhaps most successfully united in *The Smuggler's Leap* and *The Hand of Glory*, as well as in the prose tale *The Leech of Folkestone*. Everything is obvious, and little is left unsaid for the fancy to work upon ; but the effect is secured, and Barham throughout reinforces it in two distinct ways. He has much out-of-the-way lore, and his conversance with antiquities, heraldry, and the literature of witchcraft gives to his report an air of authenticity.

Also in his resource as a metrist, and especially as a rhymer, he is at least the equal of the author of *Hudibras*, who wrote chiefly in one measure, while Barham is the master of many. His cadence never breaks down ; he goes on for hundreds of pages ; he is a true virtuoso. A single illustration must serve :

> What Horace says is,
> *Eheu fugaces*
> *Anni labuntur, Postume, Postume !*
> Years glide away, and are lost to me, lost to me !
> *Now*, when the folks in the dance sport their merry toes,
> Taglionis and Ellslers, Duvernays and Ceritos,
> Sighing I murmur, ' *O mihi præteritos !* '

In the matter of odd rhymes, Browning was not more fertile than Barham ; *The Flight of the Duchess* (1845) belongs to the same period as the *Ingoldsby Legends* ; and *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* was published in 1842, not long after *The Jackdaw of Rheims*.

It was ' *Maga* ' that nursed the talent of the gifted ballad-maker and parodist, William Edmondstoune Aytoun (1813-65), whose Tory Scottish fervour, and whose turn for hoax and solemn mimicry—rather noisy, rather common, but not ill-natured in intent—are all in the familiar tradition. *The Book of Ballads, edited by Bon Gaultier*, collected in 1855, was composed by Aytoun in concert with Theodore, afterwards Sir Theodore, Martin (1816-1909), a deft and industrious translator from Horace, Catullus, Dante, and many German poets, and further the biographer of the Prince Consort. *Bon Gaultier* is best perused in the later editions along with the cuts of Leech, Doyle, and ' Crowquill ' (Alfred Forrester). The authors cannot always be discriminated ; but the archaic rhymes like *Little John and the Red Friar*, and also the ' Spanish ballads ' done in the manner of Lockhart, are Aytounesque. Leigh Hunt in his feeble hour, and Robert Montgomery, and Bulwer Lytton are poor game, but fairly hunted down. Perhaps the closest and wickedest of the parodies, whoever may have made it, is *The Rhyme of Sir Lancelot Bogle* ; it is an absolute echo of Mrs. Browning's more facile and cloying melodies, and produces just the same sort of amused irritation. Tennyson, in 1844, was still on probation with the public and facing criticism and skits. *The Lay of the Lovelorn* is a close, if blunt and rather vulgar, parroting of *Locksley Hall* ; much better conceived is *The Laureate*, ' with his butt of sherry to make him merry.' There are other good things in *Bon Gaultier*, but he sadly overdoes the trick of anticlimax, and many of his ' topical ' jests are as dead as those in an old pantomime.

Aytoun's eight Jacobite poems, *Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers* (1848-9), proved their popular quality by many editions, though they often tempt us, rather unfairly, to call them the work of a less efficient Macaulay. The relationship of the two writers has its piquancy ; for these *Lays*, in their measures, in their ring, and in many a turn of phrase and image, recall *Horatius* or *Lake Regillus*. The spirit of *The Island of the Scots*, the island in the Rhine captured by the volunteer refugees, is very like that of the three who ' kept the bridge so well,' and the resemblance remains in Aytoun's two best pieces, *The Widow of Glencoe* and *The Execution of Montrose*, though it by no means impairs their gallantry or freshness. Both poets play the tune of Scott, with original variations ; but in *The Heart of the Bruce* the strain of the popular ballad is more apparent than that of the literary ' lay.' At the same time, Aytoun sends forth more than once a counterblast to the Whig historian, and adds an appendix to expose and correct his picture of Claverhouse. We do not know if he was mollified by *A Jacobite's Epitaph*. But his work is less finished, less massive, less rememberable and less well remembered than the *Lays of Ancient Rome*.

In 1856 Aytoun produced a long monologue called *Bothwell*, in six parts. The general manner is that of the *Lays* ; but Bothwell is also capable of talking dangerously like the hero of *Firmilian, a Spasmodic Tragedy* (1854). That masterpiece of travesty itself drifts at times into something only too strangely like real poetry. The object of derision seems to be just as much Marlowe or Greene as it is the author of *Balder* or the author of *A Life Drama* ; nor is Goethe himself spared. In the overture Firmilian, after spurning Aristotle, Faustwise, considers which of his friends or loves he shall murder so that he may be qualified ' to paint the mental spasms that tortured Cain.' In the final scene a ' chorus of *Ignes Fatui* ' chant him to his death, and he falls over into the quarry on the ' barren moor ' :

> Firmilian ! Firmilian !
> What have you done with Lilian ?

The jest is kept up with unflagging relish through a hundred and fifty pages. The scene where Firmilian tosses his friend from the top of Stylites' pillar is not inferior to the preface by the author of the poem, ' T. Percy Jones ' :

> I am perfectly aware that this poem is unequal, and that some passages in it are inferior in interest to others. Such was my object,

for I am convinced that there can be no beauty without breaks and undulation.

It is clear that *Firmilian* does not strike merely at a passing fashion of verse. Aytoun, however, owed a real allegiance to Goethe. His singular poem *Hermotimus*, describing the magician who could send his soul out of his own body, and seem dead, and bring it back again, is written, no doubt deliberately, in the measure of Goethe's *Bride of Corinth*. Aytoun also made translations from Freiligrath and other German poets.

XI

Something in the classic air of Cambridge, the nursery of Praed and of James Kenneth Stephen, favours the perfection of mischievous light finish and of the scholar's jest. The union of the translator's craft with that of burlesque and humorous verse is conspicuous in Charles Stuart Blayds, afterwards Charles Stuart Calverley [1] (1831-84); who, after sowing harmless wild oats at Balliol, migrated to Christ's College and won many classical honours at Cambridge. He afterwards went to the bar; but an accident, and also a certain lack of concentration, hindered his success. Besides two thin volumes, *Verses and Translations* (1861) and *Fly Leaves* (1872), Calverley left a translation of Theocritus; and he also rendered parts of Homer and many of Horace's odes, of Virgil's eclogues, and of the Latin Church hymns. These versions are brilliant, close, and interesting, but somehow do not always read like original poetry. Some of Calverley's Latin translations from English poets, which are highly praised, have a more natural effect. But the real fruit of this training appears in the nicety of his original verses. The mimicry of the *English Idyls*, of *The Ring and the Book*, of Jean Ingelow, of Macaulay, and of Tupper is so good as to be itself excellent criticism. The tones and the metre of Praed are heard now and then; the feeling and pathos of Thackeray are not present; but once at least, in *The Cuckoo*, Calverley unlocks his heart; while *Peace* and the *Lines on Hearing the Organ* are full not only of fun but of a remarkable good nature. Calverley likes to begin seriously, and to explain in the last line that the topic, hitherto concealed, is the scuttling of a water-rat or the laying of an egg. The *Ode to Tobacco* has reached celebrity; and Calverley, as a maker of such pleasant funny little things in ivory, never fails. They have stood the sifting of half a century, and still come freshly to each generation of undergraduates. The parodies of

Dolores, *The Heathen Chinee*, and other things, by Arthur Clement Hilton, in *The Light Blue* (1872), a Cambridge undergraduate sheet, well merit to be mentioned in the same breath as Calverley's work.

The fantasies in rhyme of another scholar, William John Courthope (1842-1917), are all too few and brief. *Ludibria Lunæ* (1869), his first essay, is influenced by Tennyson of course, but still more by Ariosto, the irresponsible, in its treatment of the theme of women's wrongs. The Italian octave, with lines of eight, is the measure ; and the *limbo*, so uncouthly adapted by Milton in his 'paradise of fools,' is pleasantly utilised in this lively, well-sustained poem, which is a little overloaded with commentary and allusion. *The Paradise of Birds, an Old Extravaganza in Modern Dress* (1870), a much more finished work, owns its debt to Aristophanes. It mingles dialogue in heroics, which sometimes have a doggerel pantomime ring, with sounding, almost soaring, lyrics full of fun and poetry. Marcsnest, a philosopher of the 'development school,' and Windbag, a romantic poet, go to the Paradise of Birds in the Polar seas, interview the Roc, are arraigned for the crimes of mankind against the race of birds, the Bird of Paradise presiding ; make their defence, are just acquitted, and return upon an iceberg. There is a chorus of human souls, in purgatory for injuries done to the birds ; and the soul of a cook, and the soul of a lady, and the birds themselves, utter many melodies. There is no direct parody, but the song on the 'rise of species' has suspicious echoes of the *Hymn of Man*. Courthope gives a remarkably jaunty and satisfactory lilt to his lines :

> We wish to declare how the birds of the air all high institutions designed,
> And holding in awe art, science and law, delivered the same to mankind.

Only Courthope's verse falls within our limits. The poet seems to have been buried in the historian of poetry. Courthope's sympathies with the eighteenth century were strong ; he concluded Elwin's exhaustive edition of Pope ; he produced a short life of Addison, and an essay (1885), not very well balanced, on *The Liberal Movement in English Literature* ; and, becoming Professor of Poetry at Oxford in 1895, issued in that year the first volume of his *History of English Poetry*, of which the last appeared in 1910 ; thus accomplishing the task which Thomas Warton had begun and Pope and Gray had only planned. The adventure was a great one, and at many points worthily carried through ; with more success, certainly, as the writer drew near his favourite epoch. Rather unexpectedly,

Courthope is surer and happier in tracing the impersonal forces, social, intellectual, or psychological, that environ and colour poetry, than in the direct and genial criticism of the poets themselves. He is by choice and temper rather an historian than a critic in the stricter sense ; and his tracing of the historical currents themselves is, at any rate in his earlier volumes, often defective. But he has many passages of just appreciation ; he, and he alone, has essayed and carried through the whole enterprise, and his work, coming down to the age of Scott inclusive, does honour to the English scholarship of the last twenty-five years.

Frederick Locker (1821-95), who in 1885 assumed the surname of Lampson, is the nicest connoisseur of this period, and along with Thackeray the nicest craftsman in the more poetical species of light verse. His title for his own admirable anthology, *Lyra Elegantiarum* (1867), expresses the character of his muse. Such work gives as wide a berth to hard satire as it does to mere drollery, to mere burlesque, to mere nonsense even of the best quality, and to all verse in dialect. It must be humane and high-bred ; it must have lepidity and concision ; and it must sing, or at least be ready to sing. The matter may be as slight as you please, so the cutting be perfect. There may be sentiment ; but it must shun violence, and must be saved from mawkishness by the humorous self-criticism of the speaker, which leaves himself in doubt how far he has been serious. Passion, if sometimes present, is subject to the same restraints. The poem should be short ; the stanzas and lines are also better short ; and a refrain, or echoed phrase, is often an advantage. In his one book of verse, *London Lyrics*,[1], Locker-Lampson sedulously kept to these terms, and observed the injunction, 'Sculpte, lime, cisèle,' to the full. The volume first appeared in 1857 ; it was many times revised and enlarged, and the version that he finally approved is dated 1893. There is not much of it, after all ; but everything in it conforms to the pattern, and everything is finished. Locker-Lampson has less edge and epigram than Praed, whose influence is markedly seen in his earlier verse, and he does not often, like Praed, draw characters. He avows his sentiment more openly, and is not afraid of infinitesimal or infantine subjects—a lady's muff, or glove, or boot. But a gently witty pathos comes to predominate, and the note of *desiderium*, as in Thackeray's verse, is heard repeatedly. Some of Locker-Lampson's favourite moods and forms are to be found in *The Reason Why*, *To My Grandmother*, *My Neighbour Rose*, and *St. James's Street*. The last

of these is truly a 'London lyric,' echoing with the names of Gibbon, and Selwyn with his 'ghastly funning,' and the *Rolliad*, and Nell Gwynne; all these had known the famous street, which Lord Beaconsfield once called a 'celebrated eminence.' Locker-Lampson's excellent prose is to be read in his memoir, *My Confidences*, posthumously printed; in his preface to *Lyra Elegantiarum*; and especially in his volume *Patchwork*: a medley of anecdotes, brief essays, jests, and quotations ranging from Crashaw's *St. Teresa* to *Love in the Valley*, and from Hugo's *Gastibelza* to ditties of the author's own. As an essayist, Locker-Lampson, who was modest and fastidious about his own writings, has something of Leigh Hunt in him, and something of Thackeray; but he hardly worked this vein very far. He was retiring but sociable, a great collector of rare and good books, and a virtuoso in the best sense of the term. His description of the *genre* in which he excelled is the most masterly one that I know, and is appended to many editions of *London Lyrics*.

XII

'Mr. Dodgson neither claimed nor acknowledged any connexion with the books not published under his name'; that is, Mr. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (1832-98) would not formally own to the works of 'Lewis Carroll,' or the author of *Euclid and His Modern Rivals* (1879), to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871), *The Hunting of the Snark* (1876), or *Sylvie and Bruno* (1889, 1893). Some links, however, between the two men seem to be established by circumstantial evidence. Dodgson was for many years a mathematical lecturer at Christ Church; 'a cleric, a don, a Christian clergyman with sworn duties, a Student of the House': so York Powell has described him, and proceeds:

> Dodgson was a good teller of anecdote, a splendid player at the game of *quodlibet*, which St. Louis commended as an after-dinner sport, a fantastic weaver of paradox and propounder of puzzle, a person who never let the talk flag, but never monopolised it.

All this goes to confirm the identity of Dodgson-Carroll, who thoroughly enjoyed the game of dual personality, itself so entirely in the vein of *Alice*. Both of them, moreover, showed the same humorous perception of the workings of the childish brain; which in Carroll's later books verges even on the sentimental, while in the earlier ones it is kept in perfect balance. Carroll is not less dexterous in verse than in prose, and may

here be numbered among the poets ; if only for his Spenserian gift, visible in *Jabberwocky*, of importing new coinages—*outgrabe*, *tulgy*—into ' standard English,' and for his transposition of Wordsworth's *Resolution and Independence* into a more familiar key. The melodies, too, of *The Hunting of the Snark* are pensive, and in their style pathetic. ' A Boojum—after all ' reminds us of the delicate Virgilian uses of *tamen*.

As a master of simple-seeming prose, Lewis Carroll gains greatly, not only by the accompaniment of Tenniel's pencil, but by his own infinitely careful study of the beauties and subtleties of typography—spacing, inks, italics, and margins and bindings. The result is a harmonious whole. The same must be said of the spirit and style of his major works. Out of cards and chessmen, whose odd forms vaguely quicken the ordinary fancy, and out of cats and sheep and rabbits, and also out of gardeners (who to the infant mind form part of the animal world), Carroll's dream created distinct persons, each with his, or her, or its particular voice and features. His dialogue may be called light, and even inconsequent, by superficial observers ; but then these are persons who have never dreamed except heavily, after a city feast, and they may be disregarded as serious critics. They have no idea of what Matthew Arnold, Carroll's contemporary, liked to call *la vraie vérité* ; and they do not see the great truth that ' all depends upon the subject,' and that when the subject is the Duchess or the March Hare, conceived in Carroll's way, the result is a ' profound application of ideas to life '—to life, of which ' conduct,' says the critic, is no less than exactly ' three-fourths '—a round fraction that must have appealed to the mathematical soul of Dodgson. In his power of portraying, as Shakespeare had attempted to do, a trial-scene in which tragedy and comedy are mingled, or of representing a game with living pieces, as Middleton actually did in *A Game at Chess*, or as the Emperor Akbar (employing slave-girls) was wont to do in the sport of *pachisi*, in his capital at Fatehpur Sikri—in this art Carroll vies easily with his forerunners, as every student of high literature will admit. His works, therefore, outlive many others that might seem more solid and less fantastic.

The history of nonsense, considered as a form of art, has yet to be written ; but in the chapters that would be devoted to the ' logic of nonsense ' and to the ' rhythm of nonsense ' Edward Lear (1812-88) would make a most honourable figure. The best of Carroll is prose, with his verse not far behind : with Lear the balance is the other way. Of the two, he certainly

commands the more stately mock-heroic music, and has the greater inventiveness in rhyme. He set his stamp on the familiar 'limerick' measure of the *Book of Nonsense* (1846), which has run through more than forty editions;' and in *Nonsense Songs, Stories, and Botany* (1870), and other works, he invented ampler harmonies, known to connoisseurs of all ages. In aptness and gravity of inconsequence only Carroll is his rival. Lear moreover, being a painter by calling, is duly skilled in carefully breaking every canon of the draughtsman, and in recovering the outlines natural to and beloved by the child. He also has the gift of nomenclature; and his 'characters,' or species of character, are household words. Outside this peculiar province, he was not only a painter of birds and scenery and historic places, but a traveller. He wrote of his journeys in Greece and Albania, which drew Tennyson's tributary lines 'To E. L.' He also visited Calabria and other parts of Italy, and described them in a light happy style, his text being accompanied by reproductions of his sketches.

The nicety of Locker-Lampson was not for the many; the broader drolling and grotesque skill of *The Ingoldsby Legends* fell somewhat out of date; the bitter-sweet rhymes of Thackeray were never ignored, but they were undervalued, even though commended by his pencil, and were eclipsed by his novels. But the verse of Sir William Schwenk Gilbert (1836-1911) has had a longer lease and a bigger audience than anything else of the kind written during the last century. Gilbert is not, indeed, such a mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonious trifling as Edward Lear. It is both an advantage and a drawback that he does not by any means keep to pure disinterested nonsense. *The Reverend Simon Magus* purchases (from a Jew) a rich advowson; the parish contains no poor, but plenty of earls and viscounts:

> 'Oh, silence, sir!' said Simon M.,
> 'Dukes—earls! What should I care for them?
> These worldly ranks I scorn and flout!'
> 'Of course,' the agent said, 'no doubt.'
>
> 'Yet I might show these men of birth
> The hollowness of rank on earth.'
> The agent answered, 'Very true—
> But I should not, if I were you.'

This has quite a sharp point, and so have *Good Little Girls*, and *A Worm Will Turn*, and many other things in and out of the *Bab Ballads* (1869) and *More Bab Ballads*; the volumes that won for Gilbert his first vogue. His work is not all like the

rampant and excellent *Captain Reece*, or *The Bishop of Rum-Ti-Foo*; but everywhere in it there is the same sure knack of rhyme, and the same easy, abundant invention of musical-satirical cadence. Gilbert began his copartnership with the musician Sir Arthur Sullivan in 1871, and continued it for a quarter of a century; their first great popular success being *The Sorcerer* (1877), and perhaps the last being *The Gondoliers* (1889), or *The Grand Duke* (1896). Eight or nine of these rhymed operas appeared meanwhile, including *H.M.S. Pinafore*, *Patience*, and *The Mikado*, which were almost universally approved. None of these productions are alien to literature, and they all affected taste and manners. Gilbert, while keeping within the pale of Victorian propriety, left it considerably less assured of its own perfection; the young pedant, and the 'æsthete,' wilted before him; and his rare quality of finish raises his verse out of doggerel and sometimes into poetry. *Life is lovely all the Year*, and *Ah Me!* are poetry, nearly; and *Sans Souci* is nearer still:

> If love is a thorn, they show no wit
> Who foolishly hug and foster it.
> If love is a weed, how simple they
> Who gather and gather it, day by day!
> If love is a nettle that makes you smart,
> Why do you wear it next your heart?
> And if it be neither of these, say I,
> Why do you sit and sob and sigh?

These notes on the humorous poets of the period may be rounded off by an allusion to one of their chief victims, who deserves to be named here if only as a provoker of mirth. But Martin Farquhar Tupper[1] (1810-89), the author of *Proverbial Philosophy, a Book of Thoughts and Arguments, Originally Treated*, not only did not mean to be funny, but was accepted by a myriad buyers as profoundly serious. Tupper produced the first instalment of his *magnum opus* as early as 1838, and the complete series in 1876; reigning meantime over his public, and duly profiting. 'By 1881 a million copies of the work,' we learn, 'had been sold in America.' It is also stated that he invented, amongst other things, 'glass screwtops for bottles'; nay, that Mr. Spurgeon 'proposed to the lady who became his wife by help of a passage from Tupper.' His book is hardly *monumentum aere perennius*; Tupper, however, had *aes* in more than one sense of the word. His irregular rhymeless lines, now and then tumbling into metre, are apt to seem a nightmare parody of certain other 'prophetic books.' Many wits mimicked

Tupper, but he left little for them to do save to paint a piece of lead with a coat of its own colour. He thus addresses the reader, really quite pleasantly:

> Come again, and greet me as a friend, fellow-pilgrim upon life's highway;
> Leave awhile the hot and dusty road, to loiter in the greenwood of Reflection.
> Come unto my cool dim grotto, that is watered by the rivulet of truth,
> And over whose time-stained rock climb the fairy flowers of content.
> Here, upon this mossy bank of leisure, fling thy load of cares,
> Taste my simple store, and rest one soothing hour.

Tupper was sublimely proof against the critics, and in this shrewd and amusing passage sallies forth against the 'Zoilus' who 'sitteth down to judge his master':

> That book is doomed to be condemned; the critic must not read it;
> Some awkward beauties in the thing might tamper with his verdict;
> So it shall be handed to a clerk to note its worst and best, etc.

These lines, perhaps, are among the 'awkward beauties' of Tupper.

CHAPTER XX

EARLIER FICTION

I

In reviewing the fiction [1] of the time it is well to begin by watching the writers who entered the scene earlier than Dickens and Thackeray and often afforded them instruction, or who in other ways mark the transition from the age of Scott. The Northern school, headed by John Galt, who wrote their best during Sir Walter's lifetime, have been described in a previous *Survey* ; and so have his English followers, Harrison Ainsworth and George Henry Rainsford James, who to-day are of little account. In the present chapter must figure Warren, who carries on the fashion, so long in favour, of the lurid-farcical novel ; the fiction of high spirits, or ' high jinks,' represented by Hook, Surtees, and others ; the sea-stories of Marryat and his fellows ; and the tales of Carleton, who carries on the work of the Banims and Griffin and is their younger contemporary. Many of these writers continue long ; and two others, Disraeli and Lytton, are before the footlights during more or less the whole of the period. But all in one way or another represent, at any rate at the outset, something earlier than the ' Victorian novel ' rightly so called, and have some common features.

The good old methods of the ' tale of terror ' were well and duly carried on in the pages of *Blackwood's Magazine*. They descend to Dickens and Lytton ; and one link between the older and the newer styles is found in a work that is something between memoir, tract, and fiction. Samuel Warren's *Passages from the Diary of a Late Physician* began to appear in *Blackwood's* in 1830, and were sheaved into three volumes in 1838. The physician was Warren himself (1807-77) ; he wrought up his notes and experiences, changing the names and details, and splashing in the rhetorical colouring. He shows a good deal of courage in his topics, but is not content to let his stories tell themselves. There is a profusion of italics, capitals, blanks, dashes, interjections, and superlatives, which shows a certain nervousness ; and there are too many terrible examples made,

and too many excited sermons interspersed. But there is pathos in the *Passages*, and reality too ; they are a record of the days of duelling, high play, and execution for forgery ; and of the time when bleeding (varied by a little 'galvanism') was a remedy for most bodily ills. The language of the 'physician' himself is an odd mixture of the ceremonious and the hectic, as he describes a death from consumption, or a fit of apoplexy, or stands in front of a maniac, who is armed with *two* razors and is slightly uncertain upon whose throat, his own or another's, he shall first operate. Warren afterwards took to the law, and discoursed much upon the legal bearings of insanity. The interest of Charles Dickens in crime and in abnormal states of mind may have been quickened, and even his style somewhat inflamed, by Warren's *Passages*.

We are likewise reminded of some traits in *Chuzzlewit* or *Bleak House* by Warren's *Ten Thousand a Year* (1839-41) which came out in *Blackwood's*. There is a similar interest in grotesque legal types, a relish for the details of legal roguery, an effort to portray unfamiliar high society, and a strain of rhetoric and melodrama. It is possible according to the dates, but less likely, that the influence was the other way. Warren's plot is squalid, and his treatment almost merits the terrible word rancid. Not only the humour of Dickens, but his mysterious power of disinfecting his subject, is wholly absent. A wretched little vulgarian, Titmouse, is enabled by a conspiracy (to which he is not privy) of his wicked attorneys, to dislodge a noble family from their possessions ; for a time he riots, and they suffer ; but at last he is exposed and relapses, and the family return ; that is all. Warren has a good deal of ill-directed power, and can describe sundry blatant types of character, and also a scene like the suicide of his arch-villain, Gammon, mordantly enough.

In Theodore Hook [1] (1788-1841), farce-maker, journalist, essayist, novelist, society punster, practical jester, impromptu rhymester, and Bohemian, may also be traced a little original talent, greatly spoiled and scattered. He may earn our charity for having amused his generation. The prank and the pun are his chief stock-in-trade ; though in his novels, of which *Gilbert Gurney* (1836) and *Jack Brag* (1837) are the best known, there is a slapdash power of invention, or improvisation, and also a green-room skill (not unnoted or unshared by Dickens) in describing odd personal appearance and 'make-up.' In *Maxwell* one Major Overall is visibly a brother of Alfred Jingle. In *Gilbert Gurney* Hook relates some of his own tricks (or 'flams,'

in the phrase of the time), fathering them on a certain Daly. Even allowing for the change of taste, there is a vulgar callousness about most of them that is not amusing. Even the Regent himself had better feeling than Hook, and made the amends of a gentleman to the unhappy actor 'Romeo' Coates, whom Hook had duped by a pretended invitation to a levee. There is a bluntness about the fun of that period, even when it is good-natured, which now makes us open our eyes. The cheaper jokes of Sydney Smith, the sarcasms of Macaulay, the horseplay in Marryat's novels, the manners of old Lady Holland, the illustrations of Cruikshank and Douglas Jerrold's merry and vulgar work, *Mrs. Caudle's Curtain Lectures* (1845) —all belong, if we will, to a more robust age ('pre-Victorian' at first); the later over-refinement, now in its turn derided, is a revulsion of the exhausted nerves from too much high spirits. Hook, meantime, provides other small links between the fiction of the two periods. His Mrs. Ramsbottom (*The Ramsbottom Papers*, 1822-31), who is Mrs. Malaprop reduced to a formula, and his Rachel Stubbs, anticipate, in their phonetic spelling, Thackeray's Yellowplush, and are lively creatures; his paper on *Clubs*, a direct and happy following of Swift's *Directions to Servants*, points the way to the humours of Thackeray; *A Visit to the Old Bailey*, with its jury that alternately acquits and convicts, suggests one of the early, cruder sketches of Dickens; while the doggerel of *Polly Higginbottom* (1806) precedes *Rejected Addresses* and the quips of Thomas Hood. Theodore Hook also produced many short stories, called *Sayings and Doings* (1824, etc.). His journalistic ventures, including the virulent *John Bull*, launched against Queen Caroline, do not concern us, and are better buried.

For the sporting fiction of this period the reader must be referred to the experts; but an honourable mention is due to Robert Smith Surtees (1803-64), whose hunting Cockney grocer, Mr. Jorrocks with his misadventures, and whose general management of humours, gave some hints to Dickens for the Pickwickians. *Jorrocks' Jaunts and Jollities* first appeared in periodical form in 1831-4, and as a book in 1838; *Pickwick* began in 1836. The scene in court, where Mr. Jorrocks's appeal is rejected and opposing counsel declaim, is a rude but not unworthy model for a more famous trial. The hero goes to Paris, and to Margate, and reappears in later works (*Handley Cross*, etc.). In 1853 came a more mature production, *Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour*, with pictures by Leech; Mr. Jorrocks had been portrayed by 'Phiz.' Destitute of style, the book

is packed with shrewd observation and fun, and full of the hard knocks, encounters, and practical jests which we have found to be so rife in the novel of the time. The author is too modest when he calls Mr. Sponge a 'characterless character,' apologises for making him the hero, and professes only 'to put the rising generation on their guard against specious, promiscuous acquaintance, and train them on to the noble sport of hunting.' Mr. Sponge does not want for 'character'; he knows his world, he can ride, and in spite of his sponging and other dubious proceedings he is not wholly objectionable. Surtees has an amazing interest in costume; the student of the history of tailoring, and of the social shades of dress, will find him a mine of information. Mr. Sponge's

> waistcoats, of course, were of the most correct form and material, generally either pale buff, or buff with a narrow stripe, similar to the undress vests of the servants of the Royal Family, only with the pattern run across instead of lengthways.

And it is much to know that of his hunting-coat 'the seams, of course, [again "of course"] were outside, and an ignorant person might suppose that he had had his coat turned.' With the same vivid particularity Surtees describes, and Leech presents, the after-dinner figure of the Pecksniffian Mr. Jawleyford, the next-morning disorder of Sir Harry Scattercash's drawing-room, and the day with Puffington's hounds. Mr. Sponge ends, satisfactorily enough, as the wealthy proprietor of a respectable 'cigar-and-betting-rooms' in Jermyn Street.

Such works,[1] though not exactly literature, were at times, as we see, the cause of literature in others; and the rest of their kind can barely be mentioned here. In the tales of Francis Edward Smedley (1818-64), which include *Frank Fairlegh* (1850) and *Lewis Arundel* (1852), there is an unaffected and agreeable mixture of riding, duelling, good quips and high jinks, love-making, and villainy baffled; and in those of Major George John Whyte-Melville (1821-78), which number some twenty, there is a similar mixture, but a greater ambition, and their delineation of English sport and its niceties is pronounced to be very accurate by those who know. Whyte-Melville's *Kate Coventry*, in which the heroine tells her own story, is a very light but spirited recital of riding, hunting, flirtation, and good spirits; but he also produced romantic-historical fiction somewhat in the Lyttonian style.

II

The novel of warfare had flourished during the latter years of Scott; the Peninsular campaign had served as a canvas for George Gleig (*The Subaltern*, 1825) and Thomas Hamilton (*Cyril Thornton*, 1827); and Michael Scott in *Tom Cringle's Log* (1829-30) and *The Cruise of the Midge* (1834-5) had produced sprightly faithful sketches of the sea. Meanwhile had appeared Captain Frederick Marryat [1] (1792-1848), who carries on this line of excellent sea-stories, but in the older and tougher tradition inaugurated by Smollett. He has the same nerves of whipcord: he too deals, though with far better temper and more humanity than Smollett, in floggings and crimpings, in duckings and bastings and boozings, in raw practical jests and cruelties; and also—no man better—in sea-battles and sea-storms, and sea-adventure in all parts of the world. Marryat was a naval officer of note and courage, who had served and fought everywhere, having originally run off to sea. He commenced author after completing his service; he had watched what he describes, and, with all his love for caricature and farce, he must be judged a true painter of sea-life and manners. He launched his first tale, *Frank Mildmay*, in 1829; and next year, *The King's Own*, which contains, as yet crudely mingled, the same sort of bold loud humours, the figures of fun and the scenes of combat, that swarm in its successors. The dates show how swiftly he spun his yarns, which are none the worse for that. *Peter Simple* and *Jacob Faithful* appeared in 1834, *Japhet in Search of a Father* and *Mr. Midshipman Easy* two years later. These four are the most popular of Marryat's books, and are full of shrewd rough characterisation. His imagination, here of the circumstantial and positive order, becomes more ambitious in *Snarleyyow* (1837) and *The Phantom Ship* (1839); but it does not fail, it does not miss the horrible-grotesque. Marryat next wrote boys' books, full of Crusoe-like interest and very simple morality, of which *Masterman Ready* (1841) is the pleasantest. Amongst his other works may be mentioned *The Pacha of Many Tales* and *Percival Keene*; but they fall into two or three types, and need not all be recited.

Japhet, for instance, is not a sea-story, but the autobiography of a foundling, very much in the eighteenth-century manner, and reminiscent of Defoe. The half-honesty of Japhet, who runs through endless vagrant scrapes, is represented with the same sort of skill as Colonel Jack's. Japhet shrinks from the meanest kind of cheating, and is just decent enough to reconcile

us to his final good luck. Dickens, it is clear, knew the book. Japhet's master, the apothecary Cophagus, talks in Alfred Jingle's way :—' father—um—can't tell—love—concealment—child born—Foundling Hospital—put out—and so on ' ; and here too is the ancient situation, used in *Our Mutual Friend*, of the two penniless adventurers who marry, each expecting a fortune from the other. In *Percival Keene* the narrator is another cheerful, brave, callous, and resourceful adventurer, also of doubtful birth ; he learns that he is a lord's bastard, coolly and ingeniously trades on the knowledge, serving on his own father's ship ; fights, has hair-breadth escapes, and prospers. Both of these are stories of humours and affrays, and so are *Peter Simple*, *Jacob Faithful*, and many more. Clear in the memory remain persons like Mr. Chucks, with his elegant, trailing off into blasphemous, diction. Like many actual men, these beings are humourists and nothing more ; but they are lively and salient humourists. It has often been pointed out how Marryat thus supplies an historical link between Smollett and Dickens. Another such link is to be found in his English. It is much looser and more slapdash than Smollett's English, which is remarkably classical and pure. But it is plain, good, enviable English all the same, and well fitted to Marryat's scene and speakers. His plots, no doubt, are almost always nothing ; but this is the old privilege of the ' picaresque ' novel, which makes no pretence to plot.

Yet in *Snarleyyow, or, The Dog Fiend*, there is for once a certain composition and unity, which is the unity not simply of the hero but of the *motif*. It is not that the whole scene is ' laid between the Channel and the Texel,' nor that the tale occupies just ' the regular nine months ' ; this is only the author's jest ; but it consists in the uncanny ubiquity and vitality of the cur Snarleyyow on the one part, and of Mr. Smallbones on the other, the two intended victims and mutual foes, who ever turn up alive, with more than catlike persistence, after being cut adrift, or proffered arsenic, or chopped at with axes. The terrors of the crew, and of their villainous bully-captain Vanslyperken, are duly mocked and explained away for the reader ; yet the supernatural air hangs over the story still. Master and cur are fairly strung up at the end, and Smallbones is saved. Long as the tale is, it is not tedious except for the Jacobite plot so hastily cobbled into it. Marryat's peculiar sort of entertainment, and his scene-painter's skill, which forces us to stand well back to do it justice, are well seen in *The Dog Fiend*. His Jemmy Ducks, his Corporal Van Spitter, and his

widow Vandersloosh stand out clearly enough. As he truly says, every one in the book deceives every one else, and the only honest creature in it is the malignant Snarleyyow himself.

Another sea-yarn, *Rattlin the Reefer* (1836), by the Hon. Edward George Greville Howard, was announced as being 'edited' by Marryat, and is a work of the same school, but with a difference. Rattlin, like Japhet, searches for and at last finds a father, and an estate besides. He suffers from the brutal upbringing of the day; his teachers and other oppressors are described with bitter, Smollettesque energy; one of his best-told adventures is a great barring-out. He goes to sea; serves under a captain who is at first malicious and at last insane; undergoes various bullyings and beastly hoaxes; smells powder, and has strange adventures in the West Indies; comes home, chasing and chased by the villain of the tale; and at last settles down well. All this is very much according to pattern, including the clumsy plot. But Rattlin is less cheerily callous than Marryat's heroes; despite all the horseplay and bloodshed which he sees and shares in, he has some heart and some capacity for remorse. The book, though often high-flown, has a sombre and almost a tragic quality; and the style has some intensity and untrained force. Howard may have been reading the poets when he speaks of a lady's 'night-emulating hair,' but the phrase seems beyond the scope of Marryat. There are many excellent descriptions, such as that of the surprise landing on St. Domingo by the British frigate; and the narratives of Rattlin's delirium during yellow fever, and of his brief love-passage with the beautiful mulatto, are admirably written.

III

The inner and sterner life of Ireland had been painted in the previous age by the Banims and Griffin, and their work was now to be continued by a master; but before reaching Carleton the chronicle must pause to notice two writers, Lover and Lever, who depict for the most part the lighter, harum-scarum aspect of the scene, and who have to answer not a little for the popular English notion of Paddy, Rory, and Mickey. They describe what they saw faithfully enough, but it is the surface. Lever, certainly, had the better and more sustained gift of the two; yet Samuel Lover[1] (1797-1868), who has been overslighted by the historians of letters, comes nearer, in his *Rory O'More* (1837), to presenting the bitter realities of his country. The story, which the author expanded out of a ballad and also

turned into a play, is laid in the year 1798 ; and Hoche and Wolfe Tone make their appearance. Behind all the clatter of puns, and ' bulls,' and repartees there is the sombre setting of conspiracy, bloodshed, and subornation. Lover is a careless and artless writer, but his thinkers, and cottagers, and informers, and soldiery, are distinct enough. His *Handy Andy* (1842), on the other hand, is farce : Andy is the blundering servant, the comic man, an *étourdi* in low life ; the fun is sometimes poor, often good, and must be perused in a boyish spirit ; the book is still reprinted and has life in it. Lover also did well in saving his *Legends and Stories of Ireland,* and in the business of ditty-writing. He was a painter, a reciter, a drawing-room ' lion,' and a musician, and toured through Britain and America with his entertainments.

Charles James Lever[1] (1806-72), a novelist of much wider range, a wanderer, a most meritorious describer of war, a boon companion, a *raconteur,* and the possessor of infinite high spirits, Dublin wit, and anecdote, first became known through his *Confessions of Harry Lorrequer* (1837), which he confesses to be ' little other than a notebook of absurd and laughable incidents.' As in much else of Lever's writing, the interest turns largely on two ingredients ; one is the *hoax,* which figures so often, in its various degrees of humour and cruelty, in the fiction of Hook, of Marryat, and of the youthful Dickens ; and the other is the *row,* with heads broken and tables overturned, which Lever and his characters love equally well. The drawings of Hablôt Browne (' Phiz '), with their grotesque animation, are the best commentary on these incidents, which Lever's vivacity seldom fails to carry off. Drink and drubbings, love-makings, and escapades, riding and duelling, are also the staple of *Charles O'Malley, the Irish Dragoon* (1841). But the book is a great advance on *Lorrequer.* Lever had lived at Brussels among the military, and at the end of *Charles O'Malley* he describes the Duchess of Richmond's ball with much life and likelihood, if without the art of Thackeray. The pictures of the Peninsular battles are far more remarkable ; and on Lever's war-pieces, even more than on his comedy, his credit as a novelist rests. He introduces his dragoon not only to Wellington but to Napoleon ; and they are both truly seen, as Charles O'Malley would see them. The story, with all its endless padding and anecdotage, goes smartly ; and the servant, Micky Free, a character of the type which the true Irishman is apt to resent and repudiate, is a most lively theatrical figure. The flow of strong drink through Lever's

pages is noticeable to the modern reader ; but this is probably true to fact.

These works, in one aspect, continued the tradition of the military and naval story, which we have seen flourishing during the reigns of George the Fourth and William the Fourth. Lever's experience in Canada, in Germany, and in Belgium broadened his canvas, and in *Jack Hinton* and *Tom Burke of Ours* (1843) he presents the same medley of humours and battles, in the same devil-may-care spirit, with the same facility and true if hasty colouring. He improvised ; he was usually hard up. After 1842 he was back in Dublin, spent money, edited the *Dublin University Magazine*, forgathered with Thackeray, left, and wandered again over the Continent. He poured out more novels, under pressure ; among them *Con Cregan* (1849) and *Maurice Tiernay* (1852). Here Lever begins to tone down ; he composes more slowly and patiently, and with less of his former vivacity, but his knowledge of the world, or of its appearance, is naturally wider. He was consul a while at Trieste, and in his later years wrote another batch of stories, including *Luttrell of Arran* and *Lord Kilgobbin* (1872). *Maurice Tiernay* is a good example of his method while in mid-career. The tale begins with tumbrils and Robespierre. Tiernay, part-French, part-Irish, does well, but against orders, at the passage of the Rhine, and is led out to be shot for indiscipline, but gets off. Next he shares in the invasion of Ireland, and is stranded after its failure. He ends in Austria, after more gallantries, as one of Napoleon's colonels. The passages of battle and adventure are often admirable ; so are the descriptions of a fire in a house packed with gunpowder barrels, and of the guillotine ; and though the rollicking tone is present, it is not predominant, and the romance is of a sound texture. Lever, it will be seen, was much more than a mere rattlepate and farce-monger. It was his ill fortune that by the time he had begun to take both life and the art of fiction seriously, he should have lost some of his earlier lightness and freshness, and should too frequently have dulled his style by over-production.

' I have often thought,' wrote William Carleton,[1] ' that man's life is separated or divided into a series of small epics ; not epics that are closed by happiness, however, but by pain.' His own life (1794-1869), as he relates it, is more like a string of ballads than of epics. They are not all painful, but there is a kind of haunted cheerfulness about many of them. He tells of his feats of fighting, leaping, dancing, starving ; of his talk with his long-since-married first love, to whom he had never

before spoken, only looking at her for years during the service at the wayside altar ; of their honest avowal, in the husband's presence ; of his pilgrimage to Lough Derg, when Neil McCallum, another pilgrim, stole his clothes ; of his escape in the streets of Mullingar, when the Highland regiment ran amok and slew ; of his endless rebuffs, and of the friends whom he always found. It is one of the best autobiographies of the time, without rancour and without rhetoric. It was long before Carleton found out that he could write ; but he afterwards saw that his vagrant destiny had always been pushing him to write. His later struggles were of another kind—with poverty, with publishers, and with the fitfulness of his own inspiration. He wrote much, and was highly praised, and could hardly live ; he was shiftless, and got little good of a long-delayed pension. Still he felt at last that with all his ill luck he had realised his genius, of which he was conscious enough.

Carleton's fiction is half fact. He often coins his actual memories, and some of the blackest scenes he describes, as in *Wildgoose Lodge*, had taken place. One chapter of his *Life* reminds us of a well-known passage in *Notre-Dame*. The cellarful of mumpers and fakers, with their sham limbs and sores lying about loose, was a real cellar. So too Pat Frayne, the hedge-schoolmaster, and the fiddler, Mickey McRory, are real persons. So Carleton can boast with truth :

> There never was any man of letters who had an opportunity of knowing and describing the manners of the Irish people so thoroughly as I had. I was one of themselves, and mingled in all those sports and pastimes in which their characters are most clearly developed. Talking simply of the peasantry, there is scarcely a phase of their life with which I was not intimate. . . . My memory, too, although generally good, was then in its greatest power ; it was always a memory of association. For instance, in writing a description of Irish manners, or of anything else connected with my own past experience, if I were able to remember any one particular fact or place, everything connected with it, or calculated to place it distinctly before me, rushed from a thousand sources upon my memory. (*Autobiog.*, Ch. xi.)

In the five volumes of his *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (first series, 1830 ; second series, 1833) Carleton makes good his promise to be the historian of Irish life and manners. These tales are real documents ; they have the note of intimate truthfulness ; the writer, with all his sympathy, is no partisan ; and he keeps his head, much to the advantage of his comedy, irony, and pathos. There is infinite breaking

of skulls, and connoisseurship in use of the blackthorn ; for which weddings, wakes, fairs, all kinds of gatherings are suitable occasions. The bottle is everywhere, and always illicit. There is nothing Carleton does not know about the inside of a hut, a shebeen, or a priest's lodging, from the furniture to the folklore. *The Lianhan Shee* and *The Three Tasks* show how he carried on the work of Crofton Croker, the chronicler of the fairies. He is an authority on tribal custom ; and those who resented Synge's *Playboy of the Western World* in our time—the drama in which all the girls run after a supposed parricide—might also have objected to *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship*, where the banns are called for three different wives in the same church on the same day by the same priest for the same man, to the joy of the whole neighbourhood. The bitter struggle for education is seen in *The Hedge School*, drawn from the life, and in *Going to Maynooth*. Carleton had known the Ribbonmen at close quarters, and his ink becomes blacker when he introduces them. In the stories where vendetta, political or private, is the motive, like *The Donagh*, *Wildgoose Lodge*, or *The Midnight Mass*, he comes nearest to the ordinary style of the romancer, and there is little thrift in his use of the lurid element. In general, his art is instinctive rather than studied. There is a sad fatiguing iteration, but a heart-piercing accent too, in his lamentable scenes. He usually lets the moral take its chance, possibly schooled by his early reading of *Gil Blas* ; he tells, with a gaiety that is not habitual to him, how Phelim managed to sell the same pig many times over, and that too in Yorkshire.

Fardorougha the Miser (1837-9), Carleton's best long story, is one of the greyest of books ; it is full of a long-drawn keening melancholy, and of a savagery too, that bear hard on the nerves and go beyond art, though hardly beyond the truth. The miser might seem an impossible figure ; he writhes in agony when he has to find money to defend his son, who is wrongly charged with murder. But Carleton often has documents in his head that disconcert our notions of what is possible ; and we dare not say that he merely invented the Ribbonman, the real murderer, who has plotted the false charge partly in self-defence and also in jealousy. The talk of this man's wild comrades, who turn upon him in disgust, equals or outdoes anything written even by the brothers Banim. Carleton keeps all his homage for his women, and the mother and betrothed of the threatened man are nobly sketched. The happy ending is too visibly a concession to be much of a relief.

Like Carleton, Mrs. Samuel Carter Hall (1800-81) drew on actual memories, though they are somewhat coloured by her ladylike style and her reading of Walter Scott. But her native speakers are convincing, and she is not unequal to scenes of violence and fray. In *The Whiteboy, a Story of Ireland in 1822*, published in 1845, she relates the troubles of an English absentee landlord who goes to Ireland resolved to administer his estates justly, but who is entangled in parties and generally bewildered. The gentry only half trust him ; he is captured by the Whiteboys, though not ill-treated ; he is witness of a secret meeting in the mountains, and there is a bloody fight. There is also a vigorous scene in which the wicked agent and his punisher are drowned together. Mrs. Hall's *Lights and Shadows of Irish Life* (1838) and her *Sketches of Irish Character* (1842) have the same character, but deal more in manners and humours than in tragedy.

IV

The state of the novel of manners just before the coming of Disraeli may be fairly judged by a glance at Robert Plumer Ward's *Tremaine, or, The Man of Refinement* (1825). It was popular, and is forgotten ; it is long-winded, and its diction is ineffable, and yet it does not want for sprightliness and point. Tremaine, rich at thirty, is a type of the *ennuyé*, but is a man of strict honour and alarmingly fastidious taste. He broods in the solitude of his Belmont estate. So he has to be humanised ; and the means are at hand in the person of Dr. Evelyn, an old friend, a clergyman, who is the possessor of ' rosy health, good-natured intelligence, and well-regulated happiness,' and further of a daughter Georgina.

> The pensiveness of Tremaine's character was always inclined to unbend in the company of women—particularly of gentlewomen. . . . The sex had a credit with him of which he had not yet been able to deprive them.

He feels ' an unintelligible sensation of interest ' in Georgina. But two volumes are required to explain and reward it, although the lady has ' the loveliest cheek in the world, damasked by the buxom air,' and although her musical ' finger had begun to be formed in Italy at the age of twelve.' Tremaine is thus drawn into county society ; he also sees something of the poor ; his misanthropy softens ; and many incidents show his unexpected nobleness of disposition. The dames and squires who annoy him are drawn with distinct skill, and with what

the author likes to call 'archness.' But Tremaine has one great drawback as a suitor; he is a disciple (late in the day) of Bolingbroke, and also of Voltaire; and the devout Georgina, though she owns her love, will have none of him. He vanishes, she pines; and he turns up next in Addison's Walk, at Magdalen, of which college we suddenly learn he is a Fellow. He is civil but distant to the other Fellows, and the President styles him 'an illustrious mope.' Dr. Evelyn pursues him, but he vanishes again. The parties next meet in France. A hundred pages, before all is well, are occupied with a stiff theological argument between Tremaine and Evelyn. After a time the sceptic 'falters,' but at last is 'greatly satisfied,' as we are carefully told, as to the 'merits' of orthodoxy. This hero is a pleasingly priggish specimen of the man of rank and fortune with perfect manners and address (here called his *abord*), which are only marred by a certain arrogance. With some change in the language, he might almost figure in the pages of Lytton, whose work *Tremaine* forecasts in more than one particular.

In 1826 the later Waverleys were appearing, and Disraeli's *Vivian Grey* was published; and, two years afterwards, Bulwer's *Pelham*. The historic scene of *Woodstock* and the wide humanity of *The Two Drovers* or *The Highland Widow* contrast with the crackle of light insolence—Regency insolence—which is heard in these youthful stories, and which sounds a new note in fiction. The likenesses between Disraeli and Lytton are on the surface, like their curls and waistcoats. Both at first practise the comedy of patrician manners; and both have a strain of romance, which is sometimes genuine but which equally often runs to inflation and rhetoric; so that we are for ever asking why and where the author is being abandoned by his own sense of the ludicrous. This mixture may be partly inherited from Byron, who had died in 1824; but then Byron, in his *Don Juan*, had derided rather than deceived himself. Still both novelists deal, as he had done, in the exotic-picturesque, in tales of the East and the South. And both deal, as he had done at times, in the supernatural or sham-occult. In Lytton this element is inordinate; but even Disraeli trifles with 'magnetism,' introduces the 'Angel of Arabia' to Tancred, and exhibits, though with a pleasant irony, a mature unconvincing phantom in *Lothair*: 'that divine Theodora who, let us hope, returned at least to those Elysian fields she so well deserved.' The comparison need go no further; the difference is one of brains. Disraeli wears well, while Lytton, save perhaps for some of his later middle-class novels, and in spite of his

unquestioned and many-faceted talent, does not. He is the glass of one literary mode after another; Disraeli's wit and observation are genuine, and so are his passion and enthusiasm, however falsely expressed.

The literary life of Benjamin Disraeli [1] (1804-81) covers intermittently more than fifty years. He inherited the bent for letters from his father, Isaac D'Israeli, the recluse antiquarian and student, and author of *The Curiosities of Literature* (1791, etc.). Born a Jew, he was baptized in boyhood; both his original and his adopted faiths, which he strove to reconcile, deeply affected his mind and career. After some early ventures in literature, he commenced novelist, and flew his kite *Vivian Grey*, still the cleverest of boyish satires. Had he been reading Thomas Love Peacock's novels? *Headlong Hall* and most of its successors were before the world. Disraeli shows the same attitude towards the social menagerie, and the likeness is suspicious:

> The host, who was of no party, supported his guest as long as possible, and then left him to his fate. The military M.P. fled to the drawing-room to philander with Mrs. Grey; and the man of science and the African had already retired to the intellectual idiocy of a Mayfair 'At Home.' The novelist was silent, for he was studying a scene; and the poet was absent, for he was musing a sonnet.

The early chapters of the book are still fresh, and are by far the best. There is no flaw in the impudence of Vivian, the first of the Disraelian adventurers. The Marquis of Carabas, whose vanity Vivian steers, and Mrs. Felix Lorraine, whose attentions he ignores (wisely, for she has tried to poison him), are cruelly yet precociously sketched. The German court scenes and popular humours are also to be noted in so new a writer; but his pleasantest piece of assurance is to borrow silently, and to mangle in the borrowing, one of the famous pages of the *Religio Medici*, which the reader may easily discover. *Vivian Grey* is full of rubbish, but Disraeli was wrong in wishing his first story to be forgotten.

Next he turned to satiric fantasy, which at first is a little heavy. *The Voyage of Captain Popanilla* (1828) preceded by some months Macaulay's attacks on James Mill, and is an assault upon the Utilitarians and the theory of the 'greatest happiness'; but it also attacks the Whig view of the constitution, and the currency system, and the 'colonial' system, and many other systems, in the guise of a fable. There is merit in the picture of the Isle of Fantaisie, an Utopia untroubled by laws, agri-

culture, or manufactures ; but Disraeli is not yet the English Lucian, or the pocket Voltaire, which he has it in him to be, and which after a few years for an instant he becomes. Some solemn romances, presently to be noted, intervened ; but in 1833 he produced *Ixion in Heaven* and in the next year *The Infernal Marriage*. The first of these, too little read, is perfect in its way. There is nothing superfluous in it—no politics, no allegory, and no sentiment. The ennui and arrogance and intrigues of Olympia are there : 'say what they like,' observes Apollo, 'Immortality is a bore.' To see the quality of the style, let the reader turn first to the page on which Ixion refuses to tell Juno what the tail of the Queen of Mesopotamia's peacock is really made of, and then to the page on which he does give her that information. *The Infernal Marriage* betrays some reading of *A Tale of a Tub*, and is not so light of hand, but is still excellent. Proserpine upsets the equanimity of Hell, offends the Fates and the Furies, visits Saturn, and at last gets into Elysium and really good society. The lesson seems to be found in a remark which Disraeli makes elsewhere, that 'the action of woman upon our destiny is incessant.'

Contarini Fleming (1832) is partly a diary of travel, and partly a confession in the form of a story. In Spain, in Athens, in Jerusalem, Contarini is Disraeli himself, who had toured the ground and described it in his letters home. The letters are superior to the novel ; they are more natural and ironical, and there is less paste jewellery in their English. Disraeli gravely asserted afterwards : 'I shall always consider *The Psychological* as the perfection of English prose.' Here is the prose : the first passage is like Landor's, gone a little wrong, and the second recalls Ossian-Macpherson :

> Fortunate Jordan ! Fortunate Ilissus ! I have waded through the sacred waters ; with difficulty I traced the sacred windings of the classic stream. Alas ! for the exuberant Tigris ; alas ! for the mighty Euphrates ; alas ! for the mysterious Nile ! . . .
>
> . . . Green hills ! green valleys ! a blight upon your trees and pastures, for she cannot gaze upon them ! And thou, red sun ! her blood is upon thy beams. Halt in thy course, red sun ; halt ! and receive my curse !

Even here the ardour is real ; it is the language that will not do. Nor is the book all like that. It reveals what the author calls 'a development of my poetic character.' It was wildly praised by Heine, and influenced by Goethe's *Wahrheit und Dichtung*. Contarini is a poetic soul, a would-be poet, who as

a poet fails, but whose real ambition, in the end attained, is for political power. So was Disraeli's. The fortunes of Contarini's anonymous tale *Manstein* are those of *Vivian Grey*. The violent sorrows of Contarini's childhood, his dreams, his ferocities, his adventures, have the stamp of reality; they are fragments of remembered truth in a preposterous or fanciful setting. And the scraps of Chesterfieldian wisdom which relieve the strain of the narrative really are, in their way, the perfection of prose—of *Gallo*-English prose:

'You are yet too young fully to comprehend how much in life depends upon manner. Whenever you see a man who is successful in society, try to discover what makes him pleasing, and if possible adopt his system. You should learn to fence. For languages, at present, French will be sufficient. You speak it fairly; try to speak it elegantly. Read French authors. Read Rochefoucault. The French writers are the finest in the world, for they clear our heads of all ridiculous ideas. Study precision.'

I must leave out the turgid *Alroy*, and *The Revolutionary Epick* too (1834), with its imitative ambitious blank verse, its symbolic picture of the clash between 'Feudalism' and 'Federalism,' and its celebration of Napoleon's entry into Lombardy. *Henrietta Temple, a Love-Story* (1837), one of Disraeli's two pure romances, claims more notice. It recalls *The Conquest of Granada*, or some other of those Restoration 'heroic plays' which foolish people think are all fustian. There is the same strain, overwrought and grotesque as you will, of nobility and exaltation. Disraeli had been crossed in love and soon found some relief in writing. The passion that he describes is not what is called Oriental, nor yet is it purely chivalrous; but it is true; Eros is there, unconquered, and overriding all things, and sometimes dropping into rant. Armine, the hero, is only of mark as the victim of Eros; he is a shabby creature in himself. Engaged to a quiet heiress, he meets Henrietta Temple, takes fire, hides his engagement from her, and wins her heart. She finds him out, and drops him, and accepts a quiet and devoted peer. Then the heiress finds out Armine, and she too drops *him*, very properly, and he gets into a debtor's gaol. Thence he is rescued by a cheerful adroit friend, De Mirabel, who is drawn straight from Count D'Orsay and is the prince of diplomatists and good fellows. De Mirabel at last effects a change of partners; the two quiet ones pair off obligingly, and the pining Armine and Henrietta are united. The plot is hardly worthy of Disraeli's wits, and the shuffled

quartet, cleverly as the trick is done, do not retain our interest. But all this is the afterpiece ; in the opening chapters the passion burns true and high, and then burns out. In recompense there is much good comedy. Old Lady Bellair, full of life and fun, and thirsting at the age of ninety for yet more fun and life, is (and was) a real person. The same may be true of the moneylenders, gentry of Disraeli's own race. He had good reason to write feelingly on that most tragi-comical of all topics, the horrors of debt.

The other sheer romance is *Venetia* (1837). Here the plot runs plainly and smoothly enough, or it would do so if we were not distracted by our knowledge of the facts. It is a roguish and ingenious muddle of the biographies of Byron and Shelley. Plantagenet Cadurcis is Byron, and his mother is Byron's mother ; and their wrangles, which are recited with masterly skill, are quite in the spirit of the historical evidence. Marmion Herbert, the unknown father of Venetia (who has only seen his picture) is a deserting husband, a dreamer, a charmer, a poet ; a travesty of Shelley, with many traits of the real Shelley embodied, and his essence left out. Then begins the medley. Cadurcis-Byron first reviles the life and doctrine of Shelley-Herbert, and then falls under his charm, being already in love with his daughter. Herbert's wife, Lady Annabel, has, moreover, some features, including the stringent virtue, of Lady *Byron*, Byron's wife ; and yet at last, for the sake of the young people, she becomes reconciled to her vagrant Marmion-Shelley. Apart from all this, there is abundance of colour and humour in *Venetia* ; it is a real picture of manners ; the hand of the writer has grown firmer ; and this is on the whole his most harmonious story, and his best composed.

V

Time passed, Disraeli entered the Commons, failed at first, then made his mark, invented and headed his ' Young England ' party, formulated his programme of ' Tory ' democracy, spoke and pamphleteered in its interest, and embodied it in three of his most noted novels. *Coningsby* (1844), the opening story of the political ' trilogy,' of which the others are *Sybil* and *Tancred*, is the first book into which Disraeli put all his brains, though its unity suffers in consequence. He says that it is a study of the origin of political parties ; but it is one-third history and affairs, one-third humours and manners, one-third vision and romance. The author's Orientalism comes to a climax. We

meet the preposterous, the all-accomplished Sidonia, with his callous heart and searching brain, with one hand on the purse-strings and the other on the policy of Europe ; a Jew's heated daydream of the ideal Jew. But Sidonia is also the mouthpiece of the huge and bombastic, but not untrue, tirade upon the Hebrew genius, which is at once a confession of faith and a protest. A protest, for we must remember that no professing Jew was to be admitted to the Commons until 1858.

Coningsby introduces a new strand into the social pattern of Disraeli's novels. North and South, manufacturer and nobleman, are brought into conflict by the somewhat commonplace and cheap expedient of Coningsby's love-affair with the daughter of the self-made Milbank, who is the hereditary foe of Coningsby's grandfather and patron Lord Monmouth. He, Lord Monmouth, is studied from the ' wicked Lord Hertford,' Thackeray's Marquis of Steyne. But Disraeli leaves out the more horrid features, and is content to retain only selfishness, despotic cruelty, insolence, and the grand manner. In Lord Monmouth's meeting with Coningsby we again find the acme of Disraeli's sardonic prose :

> And this was his child ; the only one of his blood to whom he had been kind. It would be exaggeration to say that Lord Monmouth's heart was touched ; but his good-nature effervesced, and his fine taste was deeply gratified. He perceived in an instant such a relation might be a valuable adherent ; an irresistible candidate for future elections ; a brilliant tool to work out the Dukedom. All these impressions and ideas, and many more, passed through the quick brain of Lord Monmouth ere the sound of Coningsby's words had seemed to cease, and long before the surrounding guests had recovered from the surprise which they occasioned them, and which did not diminish when Lord Monmouth, advancing, placed his arms around Coningsby with a dignity of affection that would have become Louis XIV., and then, in the high manner of the old Court, kissed him on each cheek.

The variety of scene in *Coningsby* is incessant. The Eton pranks, the horse-race, the Tadpole and Taper colloquies, and the home of the Lancashire mill-owner are brilliantly described, and all is well woven into the web of political narrative and reflection. But the book shows another quality of Disraeli, namely, his depth of heart. The love-passages prove this, and so does the sympathetic picture of Coningsby's lonely childhood. Few of our novelists, and few of our great public men, have had more heart than Disraeli. It is a pity that his malignity must also be chronicled. In the personage of Mr. Rigby he perpe-

trated a violent libel on Croker. The satire bites deep, but too deep, and is spoilt by iteration.

In *Sybil, or, The Two Nations* (1845), the fabric is somewhat similar, but there is more labour and less art. The romantic parts are unwontedly absurd. Sybil is the high-souled and lovely daughter of the people, and is thus cut off from her Tory democrat, the equally high-souled but unluckily high-born Egremont. But she becomes, melodramatically, a rich heiress, and so the problem is settled. In this tale Disraeli tries much harder than he had done in *Coningsby* to study the democracy. He says that his real topic is the condition of the people. He visits the territory of Charlotte Brontë and Charles Kingsley; he goes (he actually went) into the North; he exhibits Labour angry, and the misery of a factory town, and the onset of the 'Hell Cat' rioters. And he describes violence well; but he cannot make the common people talk. Their dialogue in his hands is forced and pitiable. He has got up his material; with much sympathy, but still he has got it up. At last it wearies himself. How he brightens when he gets back to Vanity Fair, the Lobby, and the racecourse! Nothing excels the conversation of his bored betting young men. Tadpole and Taper run about once more, like lively black beetles. The most distinct personage of all is Egremont's elder brother, Lord Marney, sharp, stingy, domineering, and selfish. Egremont himself is merely the voice of the author's ideas and sympathies. Disraeli treats all this part of the book, of which 'the form,' he says, is 'light and unpretending,' as a mere interlude to his serious purpose, and as a bait to the reader. But it is the part to which the reader returns.

Tancred, or, The New Crusade (1847), reveals Disraeli in his full energy as a satirist, in his full intensity as a visionary, and in all his ambition as a romancer. The London comedy, which occupies the earlier chapters, is again admirable; but this, again, is intended only as a foil to the dreams of Tancred, who, dissatisfied with the confused creeds of the West, and also, like his creator, with the Bartholomew Fair of English politics, longs to see the Holy Sepulchre and pierce the great 'Asian mystery.' But there are obstacles, some of which vanish of themselves; and one of these is the lady who seems at first to be his predestined soul's companion, but who turns out to be a gambler in railway stock. Tancred's parents, the Duke and Duchess of Bellamont, are harder to dispose of. Lord Eskdale, their adviser, considers with them how to 'prevent Tancred from going to Jerusalem, without, at the same time, opposing

his wishes.' The plot is that Tancred shall be asked to go in his own yacht, the mere building of which will breed delay.

'People talk very lightly of the Mediterranean, but there are such things as white squalls. Anxious parents, and parents so fond of a son as you are, and a son whose life for so many reasons is so precious, have a right to make it a condition of their consent to his departure, that he should embark in a vessel of considerable tonnage. He will find a difficulty in buying one second-hand; if he finds one it will not please him. He will get interested in yacht-building, as he is interested now about Jerusalem: both boyish fancies. He will stay another year in England to build a yacht to take him to the Holy Land; the yacht will be finished this time twelve months; and, instead of going to Palestine, he will go to Cowes.'

'That is quite my view of the case,' said the Duke.

'It never occurred to me,' said the Duchess.

Lord Eskdale resumed his seat, and took another half-glass of Madeira.

But Tancred does go East, armed with letters from the egregious Sidonia. The rest of the book is made up of scenery, intrigue, and vision, with satire never far away. The Oriental intrigues, oddly enough, are rather dull, except for the figure of the slippery but attractive Fakredeen, who cherishes his own debts with the affection of an artist. Otherwise, Disraeli seems to lose his sense of humour when he gets to Palestine. For there is a certain noble Astarte, princess of the 'Ansarey'; and this Astarte worships in a private Pantheon composed of the very best Greek statues, which have been strangely saved from the wreck of the classic world. The same lady is also wrung with jealousy of the fair Jewess Eva, with whom Tancred wishes to link his lot. He returns to Jerusalem, and in a garden declares his heart to Eva, who faints, and recovers, and looks around her 'with a wildered air.' But shouts are heard, and the book ends with the sentence that 'the Duke and Duchess of Bellamont have arrived at Jerusalem.' Truly Tancred proved, as Disraeli remarks, not a 'tractable' hero. The book is full of such absurdities and also of colour and humour; and it represents the author's deeper dreams, his thirst for pageant and adventure, and his need for something, amid the cockpit of politics, on which he could stay his imagination.

A clergyman once wrote to ask Disraeli what the great Asian mystery really was, and in reply was recommended to make 'repeated and frequent study of the work, as the most efficient means for his purpose.' So the mystery is left blazing on the

poster, and the conjurer never explains it. At times, no doubt, it is nothing more abstruse than the passion of the *revanche* : the East is to turn the tables on the conquering West, and to come into its own both materially and spiritually. This sentiment is easily traced in Disraeli, but it by no means exhausts the problem. His Judaism is a large topic ; it is fierce, authentic, sincere, and also original. In one passage, worthy of Heine, he pictures the poor Hebrew of Hamburg or Houndsditch celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles amid the comments of the Anglo-Saxon Buggins. In his parliamentary speeches and in a chapter of his *Lord George Bentinck* Disraeli develops his views on the destinies and wrongs of Israel. He fought steadily for the removal of Jewish disabilities. Not, however, in the name of the 'equivocal' principle of religious liberty, which implies equality of rights for all. The claim of the Jew rests on his superiority to other races ; for 'all is race.' Christianity is 'completed Judaism.' 'It is no doubt to be deplored that several millions of the Jewish race persist in believing in only a part of their religion.' One of the queerest arguments on record follows. The crime of the Crucifixion, if it really was committed by Jews, or by some Jews,—what if it had *not* been committed ? 'What would have become of the Atonement ?' 'Nay, could that be a crime which secured for all men eternal joy ?' Unanswerable indeed ; the dialectic is thoroughly Oriental in its staggering gravity, and it would wrong Disraeli to suppose it is not seriously meant. He evolved a creed of his own, which neither orthodox Jew nor orthodox Christian could recognise ; the former, perhaps, least of all, in spite of the appeal to the racial pride that 'surely' ought to recognise the nationality of Christ. But Disraeli held to his tenet through thick and thin. It satisfied his imagination as well as his reason ; and the rooted distrust which his Judaism still inspires in countless persons is set off by the unquestioned force and sincerity with which he stated the ideals as well as defended the rights of Israel. He returned to the charge late in life, in his next novel.

VI

A quarter of a century passed, and Disraeli rose, having written no more fiction meanwhile. He had been Premier for a year in 1868, but in 1870, while in temporary retirement during the rule of Gladstone, he produced *Lothair*. It is connected with his earlier stories, not only by its political atmosphere, but by its religious topic. The admirer and son of Israel, in his

vision of the 'reconstructed Tory party,' had always included, by the side of his legislative and commercial programme, the reinvigoration of the English Church, as a bulwark against Rome on one side and 'materialism' on the other. But the Church was not to be repaired by the new Anglicans. These ideas are conveyed in the preface to *Lothair* :

> The writer and those who acted with him [in 1845] looked, then, upon the Anglican Church as a main machinery by which these results might be realised. There were few great things left in England, and the Church was one. Nor do I now doubt that if, a quarter of a century ago, there had arisen a churchman equal to the occasion, the position of ecclesiastical affairs in this country would have been very different from that which they now occupy. But these great matters fell into the hands of monks and schoolmen ; and little more than a year after the publication of *Coningsby*, the secession of Dr. Newman dealt a blow to the Church of England under which it still reels. That extraordinary event has been 'apologised' for, but has never been explained. It was a mistake and a misfortune. The tradition of the Anglican Church was powerful. Resting on the Church of Jerusalem, modified by the divine school of Galilee, it would have found that rock of truth which Providence, by the instrumentality of the Semitic race, had promised to St. Peter. Instead of that, the seceders sought refuge in mediæval superstitions, which are generally only the embodiments of pagan ceremonies and creeds.

I give this delightful passage at length because it shows how Disraeli stood towards Jerusalem, Rome, and Oxford. Lothair himself is the battle-ground, both socially and spiritually, between the forces of the old faith and the Anglican tradition. He is titled, wealthy, young, and ingenuous ; cardinals contend with bishops, and fair women with fair women, and emotions with emotions, for so notable a convert. But, in spite of false reports carefully engineered at Rome, and of a false position into which he weakly drifts, Lothair is not converted. The Church of England, and the Lady Corisande, secure him at last. Lothair is hardly, indeed, a person at all, but the symbol of a conflict. His guardian angel is another woman, Theodora, who stands aloof from all dogmas and dies in the Italian war of liberation. Disraeli portrays her with much affection—indeed with more affection than clearness ; and she may represent one of his own religious moods, detached from all definite belief, but in warm sympathy, political and dramatic, with the creed which he judged to be most useful for Britain and the Conservative party.

He exhibits the mundane arts of Rome, and the gyrations of the fathers and monsignori, with his fullest force of irony. He also knows the appeal of the Roman ritual. Some of his most imaginative pages describe the 'Tenebræ' and the requiem service. But Rome in his eyes is still the enemy, though a noble enemy. The narratives of war and riot are not so good, and Disraeli manages to make the Italian battles dull. But his high social satire is as neat as old, and more restrained. His duchesses, his Mr. Phœbus the painter, his Mr. Putney Giles the lawyer, his tired young gossiping noblemen, are as excellent as ever. The good women, as in the other novels, are not so much real figures as fervid descriptions. Like Scott, Disraeli seems to have had the kind of chivalry in his composition, which does not make, when it comes to portraying a heroine, for extreme salience. In his last story, *Endymion* (1880), the same feeling and the same faintness of line are seen in the figure of Myra; and, in general, the story flags, though the political instinct and observation are as keen as ever. The most vivid character is Lord Roehampton, who is Lord Palmerston almost without disguise.

Disraeli's political writing is to be found in his novels, and especially in the 'trilogy'; in his early pamphlets, namely, the *Vindication of the English Constitution* (1835), *The Letters of Runnymede*, and *The Spirit of Whiggism* (1836); in his speeches; and, in its most solid and continuous form, in *Lord George Bentinck: A Political Biography* (1852). Taken together they form a manual of his special kind of new Toryism [1] in its various stages. The Crown, the patricians, and the Church were to be banded together in the cause of the ancient constitution, and to be quickened into new life by a common care for the labouring masses. These were to be 'raised,' by many gifts and alleviations paternally allotted; while political power and franchise were to be meted out to them much more anxiously. The bourgeois, who had risen to power since 1832, was to be kept in his place; for that second Whig revolution, an evil consummation of 1688, had only put back the dial of progress. The aim was now to arrest the vulgar middle-class Liberalism which pretends to be Democracy. Disraeli's earlier statement of the case, when he was the source of wisdom for the 'Young England' party, developed into his full-blown theory of democratic Toryism. Of his foreign and imperial policy he has left no such clear record in literary shape.

His manner in this kind of writing varies greatly, and it was long before he ceased to be imitative. The *Vindication*, in

form as in contents, shows a deliberate study of Bolingbroke, though it pales beside Burke's early travesty, in another *Vindication*, of the same writer. Disraeli sometimes tries to be Burke, wise and sententious; and in Burke of course he found some nutriment; but his unit, and his ideal form of thought and expression, are at last the epigram. He is more like himself when he copies Junius, in *The Letters of Runnymede*. These are mostly scurrilous assaults, in the form of anonymous open letters to *The Times*, on Campbell, Brougham, Palmerston, Lord John Russell and many more, varied by a few eulogies, of which Stanley is one recipient. Beside the amenities of the *Letters* those of Macaulay almost cease to be vulgar; but at times they are a literary reproduction of a past manner:

> His brother secretaries remind me of two battered female sinners, one taking refuge from conscious scorn in rouge and the affected giggle of fluttering folly, and the other in strong waters and devotion.

That is in the taste of the old comedy, of Congreve or Sheridan, except that the persons described are not imaginary. Such was the playfulness of 1836. *The Spirit of Whiggism* avoids this tone, and is histrionic in another way; it is written for the people, by a plain, indignant, honest man—Swift's plain man—and is a telling summary of Disraeli's reasons for disliking the 'Whig oligarchy.' His reprinted speeches, though they were most carefully worded, and still more carefully *acted*, it is hardly fair to judge as literature. It is true that they endure the test better than Gladstone's. Their celebrated good things remind us again, irresistibly, of Congreve, with his 'palate fine' for the venomous and perfect phrase. Their bad things remind us of the Eatanswill election. Dickens, who had been a reporter, caught many times, for purposes of parody, the full-blooded parliamentary habit. Disraeli, no doubt, was cleverer than Mr. Pott. He can build up an epigram into a studied simile, in the most vicious style. Here is another example of his banter; it is found in one of those attacks on Peel which Tenniel illustrated in his cartoon of the viper and the file:

> We accepted him for a leader to accomplish the triumph of protection, and now we are to attend the catastrophe of protection. (Loud laughter.) Of course the Whigs will be the chief mourners. (Loud laughter.) They cannot but weep for their innocent, though it was an abortion (loud cheers and laughter); but ours was a fine child. Who can forget how its nurse dandled it, fondled it? (Loud laughter.) What a charming babe? Delicious little thing! so thriving! (Loud laughter.) Did you ever see such a beauty for

its years ? This was the tone, the innocent prattle ; and then the nurse, in a fit of patriotic frenzy, dashes its brains out (loud laughter), and comes down to give master and mistress an account of this terrible murder. The nurse, too, a person of very orderly demeanour, not given to drink, and never showing any emotion, except of late, when kicking against protection.

Disraeli's wrath and bitterness were sincere, but they were forensic too—the combination is a familiar one ; and accordingly he could throw them off at need ; he could write in a loftier, as well as in a duller strain than this ; and he tamed his style considerably when he became a responsible leader. His *Lord George Bentinck*, in which he travels over a recent battle-ground, is much the best of his political writings. The tone is that of the graver pages of *Coningsby* or *Sybil* ; it is the tone of the memoir, written by one who modestly hides his own part in the story. The book is a solid and closely written document, containing much of the dreary parliamentary detail of which Disraeli never tires, but also lightened by many scenes and sallies. The outburst of Judaic fervour fills a chapter. The portraits of Peel and of Bentinck himself are most finished compositions ; there is little malice in the one and little flattery in the other. Disraeli is decidedly a master of the formal 'character,' and he pounds and iterates much less than Macaulay. Some of the breathless scenes in the Commons live again in his recital. Thus *Lord George Bentinck* has some of the qualities of the political novel, a species which Disraeli is rightly said to have invented for our language.

He invented it, and no one else has made much of it, though Trollope and many others have practised it. To write such a novel well, there must needs be a first-rate political brain at work, full of first-hand information ; which must not, however, be taken too seriously, or the result will be leaden. Disraeli does not deal with the greatest events, and naturally has nothing to show like Meredith's *Vittoria*. But he was the first to provide fiction with the background, the swarming shouting scene, of our public life, reported faithfully ; he was the first to give a true picture of the ruling caste, engrossed in the great game which it takes even more seriously than it takes its other sport. And he, for all his satire and light scarifying wit, is serious too. He has his convictions ; indeed his novels are his means of making the public listen to his convictions. Herein he differs from Thackeray, for whom politics are but the dullest booth in Vanity Fair, and who has indeed no political brain. Disraeli, judged as an artist, no doubt usually produces a medley.

The affairs, the satire, and the romance do not mix very well, save perhaps in *Coningsby* or *Sybil*. Still a new kind of novel is created, which is much less artificial than it seems at first sight. The romantic and idealistic parts, though they tell us much of the author's inmost dreams, are peopled by shadows. The Egremonts and Sybils on the one side, the Sidonias on the other, are merely mouthpieces. It is otherwise with the high comedy of political ambition, with its dukes, adventuresses, gossips, intriguers and ecclesiastics, the Lord Monmouths and the Tadpoles. The lobby, the drawing-room, the country-house—the whole life of parade, comes out with sharp distinctness ; and the spectacle is made tolerable by the wit of the author, and often by that of the speakers too. This peculiar wit is best seen in the lighter passages, some of which I have quoted. One of Disraeli's casual devices of epigram has become the chief stock-in-trade of some later pens :

'Nothing can do me any good,' said Alfred, throwing away his almost untasted peach ; 'I should be quite content if anything could do me harm. Waiter, bring me a tumbler of Badminton. . . . I rather like bad wine ; one gets so bored with good wine.'

These remarks really constitute Alfred, and no more are wanted.

VII

Lytton [1] has already been compared, to his disadvantage, with Disraeli ; and what shall be said of his scores of volumes of fiction, verse, pamphleteering, and criticism, some few of which retain a more than shadowy life ? His long vogue, and his tomb in Westminster Abbey, he by no means fairly earned. Yet it is much cheaper to dismiss him out of hand than to see why he keeps, as keep he really does, a certain station in literature. His reputation was not simply a bubble one ; but if Lytton had made a vow in youth to waste and scatter his powers, he would hardly have acted otherwise than he did. Edward George Earle Lytton Bulwer (1803-73), who was made baronet in 1838, and five years later suffixed the name of Lytton to the other five, became Lord Lytton of Knebworth in 1866 ; his son, the first Earl of Lytton (1831-91), 'Owen Meredith,' has been noticed above (Ch. XIX.) amongst the poets. Lord Lytton, the father, had a long and rather prominent, though interrupted, political career ; he began by supporting Reform in 1832, and a quarter of a century later was Secretary for the Colonies. He married unhappily, and his disputes with Lady

Lytton came into painful publicity. He was further a popular dramatist ; two at least of his plays, *The Lady of Lyons* (1838) and *Money* (1840), while remarkably flat reading, have held the theatre, and not without reason. Despite all such distractions, Lytton put his best energies into novel-writing ; little else that he did calls for judgement now, and of his stories, some thirty in number, only some can here be cited, lest the page be swamped.

His first success was with *Pelham* (1828), already mentioned for its rather engaging tone of insolence. It was the hour of the dandies, and Lytton faithfully rescues their speech and dress and pose. The book opens wittily, and the style is concise, being comparatively free from the rigmarole which became habitual to the author ; and the artifice of the manner suits the subject. Still there is plenty of crime, and of emotional bombast too, and Lytton next produced a crop of stories in which topics taken from the *Newgate Calendar* are handled in the spirit of the ' novel of sensibility.' The highwayman with a heart of gold, the forger with regrets, the murderer with culture and a conscience—the whole tribe, in fact, of the ' sentimental rat-catchers ' who, as Coleridge tells us, are *not* to be found in Shakespeare ; the tribe which Thackeray was to show up, all too faithfully, in his *Catherine* ; of such, in general, are the heroes of *Paul Clifford* [1] (1830) and *Eugene Aram* (1832) ; and Lytton returned to this fertile field later still in *Lucretia* (1846). These experiments, says a recent critic [2] with justice,

> fall into line with *The Robbers* (1782), *Caleb Williams* (1794), *The Monk* (1795), *The Borderers* written 1795-6, *Melmoth* (1820), and other books concerned with the criminal's justification of himself and demand for sympathy and understanding.

Such a purpose, of course, has inspired works like *Crime and Punishment*, not to speak of *Macbeth* ; but then all depends on the treatment ; and Lytton's offenders, though studied from actual Fauntleroys and Arams, carefully contrive to lose reality and forfeit sympathy. Their theatric habit, or rather the author's, is inveterate, and so is his trick of false extenuation, and of dressing up squalid motives in lurid or lofty language. Yet with all their faults these stories move quickly ; the melodrama is well put on ; and there are many signs of brilliant dexterity by the way.

Lytton next turned, intermittently, to historical fiction, and put some of his hardest work into the venture, though he left nothing that can be mistaken for masterly. There is power in

The Last Days of Pompeii (1834); the antiquities are over-carefully got up, the colouring is tawdry, John-Martinesque, or what we will; the blind girl Nydia assaults the feelings too obviously; and yet there is a certain splendour and pace about the whole for which much can be forgiven. Not so with the dreary *Ernest Maltravers* (1837) and *Alice* (1838), which succeeded the first of Lytton's strictly historical novels, *Rienzi* (1835). *The Last of the Barons* appeared in 1843, *Harold* in 1848. These novels cost Lytton much reading, and much hard study of the requisite stage properties; which, along with the good old 'by my halidome' dialect, he conscientiously produces, skipping from courts and princes to commons and outlaws, and introducing battles, riots, intrigues, love-making, and costume of all kinds, with an almost ghastly fluency and alacrity. There is plenty of movement and scenic effect scattered through these tales; and yet they remain, when all is said, exercises and made-up things, of the kind that is called 'deadly-lively': a phrase that fits only too much of Lytton's writing.

His changes of style and subject are in no sense continuous. Phase is followed by phase, without being itself abandoned. He catches, or divines that he can direct, the public taste, like a salesman of genius, and he produces a new fashion, or one that looks new; but he has the old wares in store, and out they come again at the right moment. He goes the round of his resources more than once, and yet invents to the last. His first long supernatural tale, *Zanoni*, appeared in 1842, after some early experiments; Lytton was then in the midst of his historical novels. The best and briefest, *The Haunted and the Haunters*, bears the same date (1859) as *What Will He Do With It?*, the last instalment (for the time) of the domestic series; next came, in 1862, *A Strange Story*. *Pausanias the Spartan*, posthumously printed, is a 'reversion to type'; *Kenelm Chillingly*, which he was writing at his death, is a new variety of the novel of manners. Certain tricks and certain excellences run through all his novels; but as to scene and topic, they might well have been written by several different men.

Magic and the occult had been exploited in English fiction ever since the day of Godwin and Mrs. Radcliffe, and Lytton certainly studied the 'novel of suspense' carefully. But, as usual, he mixed new ingredients in the caldron. The Rosicrucian stage-business in *Zanoni* was not new, but is applied in an original way. In *A Strange Story*, will-binding and clairvoyance are lavishly used for the setting of a crime. The

classic investigations of hypnotism by Braid and others had long been known ; but Lytton cared only for pseudo-science, and uses the rights of the romancer without restraint. Nothing in this department is too absurd for him to imagine, or perhaps to swallow. Yet it is romance, and he can half carry the reader with him, since he is half-frightened by his own inventions. The mysterious Margrave, in *A Strange Story*, is, despite his ludicrous side, an effective mage. *The Haunted and the Haunters* is an admitted triumph ; the atmosphere of evil forces and intangible barriers, hanging round an otherwise ordinary spot, is really conveyed ; nor does the mystic 'explanation' weaken the effect. In that Utopian fantasy, *The Coming Race* (1871), there is again a dash of the occult ; but it is subordinate, and the aim is to picture an underworld of serenely superhuman beings, who are quit of war and free from bad passions, though not quite immune from institutions, and in whose eyes mankind are prehistoric savages. But Lytton makes a point usually overlooked in such dreams. If there is no humanity, there can be no genius to describe it—no Shakespeare ; so that his Utopia is sagely left imperfect. Its scenery and furniture are skilfully conceived, though rather spoilt by an excess of 'dumb waiters,' or automatic machinery for doing the menial work. Lytton never thought, or wrote, more closely than he does in this volume. It does not appear whether he was familiar with the delightful 'Gowries' of Paltock's *Peter Wilkins* (1750), with their wing-clothing. The wings of the ladies in *The Coming Race* are taken off and hung up, symbolically, when they marry. Still, they are wiser and stronger than the male inhabitants, and the business of courtship is entirely in their hands. One most ingenious chapter describes the language of the country, and the book is dedicated, unexpectedly, to Max-Müller.

Lytton's 'family pictures,' as he calls them, 'of man in his repose at his own hearth,' namely, *The Caxtons* (1849), *My Novel* (1853), and *What Will He Do With It?* (1859) were an almost stranger species, appearing when they did, than *A Strange Story* itself. It was, no doubt, the decade of the domestic novel—of *Pendennis*, *The Heir of Redclyffe*, and *Scenes of Clerical Life* ; and Lytton could not miss the general taste for the quiet order of fiction. But though he met that taste and won long applause, these books are ludicrously unlike other domestic novels, and they are even less like life. Lytton can only be quiet obtrusively ; he strikes an attitude—usually some one else's ; and at first, in *The Caxtons*, it is that of

Sterne, with rather disastrous effect. The *pastiche* begins well and even wittily, but it does not hold out; and the maudlin high-wrought passages strike the historian with ever-renewed oddness, when he thinks of them as penned in the year 1849. Caxton the father, let us admit, barely misses being a true humorous creation; indeed every character except the romantic villain is distinct; but then none is quite alive. There is the same kind of merit in the drawing of Dr. Riccabocca, in *My Novel*; but in both stories the theatric intrigue and the flood of sentiment and mutual forgiveness make a turbid mixture. Lytton's style or styles can, it is to be feared, seldom be acquitted of *grimace*; yet the amount of dispersed ability in these tales is surprising; and they represent a genuine desire in the author to quit the artificial and the *rococo*, and to be simple, natural, and human; a desire which is sometimes fulfilled by the milder scenes in the Caxton family circle, or in *What Will He Do With It?*

Lytton's poems (not his dull *King Arthur*) are curious and tantalising; they are forgotten, yet nothing shows so plain his fatal capacity for being almost excellent. *The New Timon*, to which Tennyson's retort, afterwards suppressed, was natural but unjust (for it was quite false to say that 'half the little soul' was 'dirt'), is of less interest than *St. Stephen's* (1860), a series of verse 'characters' describing the great parliamentary figures of the last three centuries, down to Macaulay and Praed. Written in heroics, it is a remarkably late and sprightly, though diffuse, imitation of Pope: a strange turn to be taken by the romantic declaimer concerning the True and the Ideal. *The Lost Tales of Miletus*, on the other hand, are bold ventures in blank verse stanzas of sundry and dubious kinds, and a new variety of the 'Hellenic.' And there is beauty in *Corinna*, only again there is the mysterious falling short. It may seem that too much has been said here of a writer of whose work so little seems fated to live; but Lytton's gifts are so various, he filled so large a space in the eyes of the public, and he was so clever, that he tempts analysis.

VIII

Two women novelists of the older school may be very briefly glanced at, and a single example taken from the work of each. The first is Mrs. Catherine Gore[1] (1799-1861), greatly read in her day. There is a good deal of sharp observation, and some gift for serious comedy, to be found in *Mrs. Armytage, or,*

Female Domination (1836), in spite of its ramshackle plot and profusion of vapid fashionable talk. The didactic novel of humours had long flourished in the hands of women ; and Miss Edgeworth and Miss Ferrier are Mrs. Gore's immediate forerunners. Her Mrs. Armytage embodies an abstract quality—a passion, verging on insanity, for despotic power over her family. Still, though hardly in her senses, she is quite alive ; and, more than that, she retains some dignity, and the result of her errors is sufficiently tragic to give her a share of our sympathies. She bullies her daughter, drives away a suitor, and worries her into her grave ; and she bullies her son's wife, whose relatives are vulgar. Of course she has at last to take punishment ; she takes it well, and dies. The two young women are also well drawn ; but the dukes and Lady Annabels, and the comic American, are phantoms ; and only through Thackeray's skit in his *Lords and Liveries* are Mrs. Gore's purely modish novels recollected.

Some of the other changes that were coming over the novel can be traced in a copious but now almost buried writer, Mrs. Anna Marsh, afterwards Marsh-Caldwell, in whose *Emilia Wyndham* (1846) there are both echoes of a past and omens of a new period. The plot is a mere rag. Emilia has given her heart to a young soldier, who departs, a lover only half-declared. Then, to save her ruined imbecile father, she marries a Mr. Danby, a conveyancer, who takes her to a mouldy home and a haggish mother-in-law. The old lover, supposed to be dead, reappears, married now to Emilia's butterfly friend Lisa. She tries to save Lisa from the designs of a pasteboard duke of Byronic extraction, and, meanwhile, the old lover becoming all too fervent, she awakes her husband's mad suspicions. All is cleared, and the story ceases. But the character of Danby, who is found to be a man after all and not a stick, is a remarkable sketch dashed in with charcoal ; and the scenes between him, his wife, the mother who foments his jealousy, and the interfering old servant-maid who puts things right, are of surprising energy. Mrs. Marsh, we may think, had read, and resisted, and had therefore profited by Dickens, who was now half-way through his course ; and she avoids his fatal trick of overacting. She inscribes her tale, however, to Wordsworth, and with some reason ; for the disclosure of humanity in dusty hearts like those of Silas Marner or Matthew Danby was a new theme, and Wordsworth had his share in prompting it. There is something of the same spirit in Mrs. Marsh's 'Two Old Men's Tales,' *The Deformed* and *The Admiral's Daughter* (1844).

CHAPTER XXI

CHARLES DICKENS, WILKIE COLLINS, CHARLES READE

I

CHARLES DICKENS[1] (1812-70) still has, and is sure to have, more readers of the English race than any author of his time. He has not perhaps gone deepest, or highest, but he has carried furthest; so that no one, least of all his own shade, can care much what the critics say about him; save, indeed, the critics themselves, who would soon perish if they thought about that kind of apathy, and who soon perish anyhow, and for whom it is the beginning of wisdom to wonder why Dickens should be so hard to judge when he is so easy to enjoy. 'Coroners' inquests,' observed Miss Ellen Terry, 'can't make Shakespeare into a dead man'; and the critic discovers, what all men knew, that Dickens is not dead either. Yet, in facing the world of his novels, we have to ask first of all the question, What is it, and *where* is it? Is it a world of observed reality, or one of droll unreason, or of marionettes and caricatures, or of creative fantasy rooted in life? It is all of these at once, or in turn, and the author does not know it when he shifts from the one to the other, so that we must take the bearings ourselves. The word 'art' was not so freely used in his day, and may be counted on to put up the bristles of his big delighted public, and may seem now to require a little rest; yet in truth it is not to be escaped. For the public taste is itself part of the problem; and the patience or impatience of ten thousand readers, shaking down into certain lines of liking or indifference, is a sort of artistic verdict. A good deal of the pathos of Dickens, and of his satire, and of his rhetoric has been thrown to the lions, far too easily. Life is often as odd and extravagant as he is, and just in his way; a point that is forgotten by persons who are ignorant of the classes he delineates. His high charitable temper, and his courageous spirit—burnished so bright—and his fundamental good sense, pass into the best of his art, even as the hysterical element in him and his incapacity for self-criticism tell upon

the cheaper side of it. He is so genuine, there is so much of him, that he will always bear reviewing again. He is the last writer to be finally 'placed'; only much greater, or much smaller, artists than he can be finally 'placed.' The problems, the reserves and abatements, the emphasis of praise, must alter with each generation that reads Dickens.

Now, at least, he seems to us one of the great benefactors, one of the great Christians, of his time—nay, of his nation. Until he spoke out, his countrymen hardly dreamed of how generous and hopeful they were *not*—but might dream of becoming. Some even of his worst pages leave this impression; his better pages simply radiate it. It enables him, like Scott, to procure the reader more happiness than any prose writer of his day. Such was not the gift of Thackeray, or of the Brontës, or of George Eliot, nor need it be the gift of the highest writers. It is just the gift that Carlyle [1] could not tolerate when he said of Dickens:

> His theory of life was entirely wrong. He thought men ought to be buttered up, and the world made soft and accommodating for them, and all sorts of fellows have turkey for their Christmas dinner. Commanding and controlling and punishing them he would give up without any misgivings in order to coax and soothe and delude them into doing right. But it was not in this manner the eternal laws operated, but quite otherwise.

But then *this* view is all wrong. Let those who think the kindness of Dickens sentimental and indiscriminate read his pages on American gaols, or on 'The Ruffian' in *The Uncommercial Traveller*. He is perfectly well pleased to think of certain persons being flogged. He was a fiercely practical being, with a passion for building houses, organising a troupe, working his magazines, and giving sharp advice, that was kind in the long run, to his contributors. As a fellow-craftsman [2] has stated the case:

> The offered inscrutable mask was the great thing, the extremely handsome face, the face of symmetry yet of formidable character, as I at once recognised, and which met my dumb homage with a straight inscrutability; a merciless *military* eye, I might have pronounced it. . . .

The same quality makes him a patient executant, dogged in working out either the best or the worst conception to the uttermost—riding it, as the Three Musketeers rode their steeds, either to triumph or to founder. Indeed, the worse his conception, the harder he likes to push it. This soldierly thorough-

ness is an obstruction, too plainly, to his art. And the metaphor can be ridden further; for Dickens lived in great measure to make war.[1] A ruling purpose of his large indignant spirit was to leave England other than he found it, by pillorying snobbery, and usury, and bubble companies, and shark landlords, and legal abuses, and swindling schools, and parodists of Christianity, and by denouncing cruelty to children, prisoners, governesses, paupers, outcasts; and by holding up to wrath and mockery all phrase-making, mechanical, pompous, and unreal persons whatsoever. This in itself is but the old and lawful calling of the satiric comedian; what is novel is the actual scene, first of all, that Dickens presented, and second, his method, manner, style; what belonged, in fact, to the 'Inimitable,' as he playfully termed himself to his friends.

It is plain that he thought of his fun and pathos and portraiture partly as means to this aggressive purpose, and partly as ends in themselves, and that he cheerfully failed to make the distinction himself. If we are to make it, it must be in the right spirit; that is, by considering not the purpose but the effect; seeing that good and delightful art may quite well be the result of an express moral aim. To think otherwise is mere late-Victorian art-cant, a phenomenon which itself has come into our survey. Dickens, therefore, is not only what he has been called, 'one of the best public servants that England has ever had.' That sounds too official—'un peu cadavre.' To see in what sense he is a great writer, we must first glance at the make and cast of his mind; and this is better seen when he is speaking in his own person—observing, and not inventing. His letters, sketches, and detached articles must be consulted first rather than his novels.

II

In the beginning, as we know, he was a reporter, one of the swiftest of his day with shorthand,[2] as David Copperfield is too modest to confess. Everything was swift about him—vision, hearing, feeling, gesture, and the pen. He posted over England as a pressman. Sent down to any scene of action, he jotted facts and impressions in the corners of inns or in coaches, by lamplight or no light, at fires or wrecks, at waste ends of London; noting buildings, marts, 'interiors,' manners, dialect, talk overheard; a superlative journalist, and much more. He had his share of Carlyle's 'devouring eye and portraying hand'; the transfiguring touch of Carlyle is seldom there, but the eager talent is surprising. The novitiate of Dickens is seen

in the *Sketches by Boz* (1836), and in many a casual piece ; [1] his increasing power in *American Notes* (1842) and in *Pictures from Italy* (1846) ; and the fulness of his skill in *The Uncommercial Traveller* (1861), where he is visibly a seasoned writer and sure-handed, with all his virtues and faults in their permanent array. As a man, he is best studied in this group of writings, and in his letters. For here he is simply reporting, and is not troubled with a plot—though he often tells a little tale, and that admirably ; he is not lured to concoct the glaring felicitous ending, as in his novels often happens ; and it is easier to sift his chronicle from any indignant rhetoric that he may rightly or wrongly spend upon it. His pictures of the prison, or the cheap theatre, or the ranting sermon, are hard to excel ; the style is quiet and business-like, for he has had no time to spoil it. It is often a relief to get away from the novels to these sketches. They are not all merely descriptive ; the nurse's tale of ' Captain Murderer,' in *The Uncommercial Traveller* (ch. xv.) is a piece of child's folklore wrought up by a master, and is more terrible than all his Christmas goblins and than most of his Newgate fiction. But in general he is simply taking his notes. His reports on Italy and America give the surface of coloured foreign places, as Dickens bowled past them ; he saw them as truly as ever they could be seen from without, and at such a pace ; and from these sources he took material for *Chuzzlewit* and for *Little Dorrit*. But the papers on ' Chatham Dockyard ' and on ' City of London Churches ' have a different value ; they are on homefelt far-away things, clearly and not too sentimentally recollected. They are like the best parts of *Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*. Before Dickens could come to any such perfection, he had to wrestle long with one of his master-faculties, the genie that led him furthest astray and also served him best.

III

> In the excited and exalted state of my brain, I could not think of a place without seeing it, or of persons without seeing them. It was impossible to overstate the vividness of these images.

So, in *Great Expectations*, says Pip, expecting to be killed the next moment. The brain of Dickens was constantly in this ' state.' Like the conjurer Houdin, who remembered everything in a shop-window after one look, he could at once take in a ship in dock, a caravan, a workhouse ward, a railway smash, a lodging-parlour, a man's dress and salient queernesses, or

a mob in a surge of madness ; his thirsty observing faculty seeing, all too often, things as persons, and making beds and tables moody, or kettles significant, or a clock into a humourist (so that the furniture does worse than speak)—by way of prose counterpart to the old Sicilian flowers and sheep of the pastoral poets, that weep along with the shepherd ; but also, by an inversion of the process, approaching persons themselves as *things*, or as odd animals, in the way that they first catch the eye, and then portraying them by sheer inventory. In such unguessed-of modes Dickens vastly enlarged the scope of description, and the space given to it, in the English novel.

Places he paints better, or at least more safely, than he does persons ; and when he really knows them, contrives to get at the heart of them. A Cockney, he is often rapid and general in his English landscapes, seen from the coach-window. But he knows and loves well the chief waterway, the Thames beside and below London. The River appears in at least six of his books, and in *Edwin Drood* there is the Medway. The Lower Thames is never empty, night or day, and that is what he likes in it. He knows all its reaches, its craft, its 'longshore characters, the marshes on the coast, its silences ; ' there is always,' he says, ' to this day, a sudden pause in that place to the roar of the great thoroughfare ' ; the reference is to the riverside, not then embanked, below the Adelphi. Quilp working his wherry, and Jonas arrested at the pier, are but rehearsals for the long chase and foiled escape of Magwitch, in *Great Expectations*, and for the ' awful sort of fishing ' in *Our Mutual Friend*, with its surroundings of ' discoloured copper, rotten wood, honeycombed stone, green dank deposit.' There is no fault (except, indeed, the blank verse) in the account of Hexam's body-hunt :

> Wheresoever the strong tide met with an impediment, his gaze paused for an instant. At every mooring chain and rope, at every stationary boat or barge that split the current into a broad-arrow-head, at the offsets from the piers of Southwark Bridge, at the paddles of the river steamboats as they beat the filthy water, at the floating logs of timber lashed together lying off certain wharves, his shining eyes darted a hungry look.

Dickens started this kind of writing, though it is now the prey of the pictorial reporter. And those who know a boy's fear of the marshes, when the river mist has rolled in over them, and the place or distance of alarming sounds cannot be made out, will the better value the overture to the chronicles of Pip, which

is as perfect in its keeping and colour as anything in *Wuthering Heights*. One other water-scene is not inferior. In passages of quiet and tragic veracity, where the story tells itself, Dickens does not always excel; but once he does so, in the report of 'The Shipwreck' in *The Uncommercial Traveller*; and hardly anything he has done goes home so nearly. The wreck is off Wales. The inhabitants see the calamity, and tend the washed-up dead, led by their minister and his family; that is all. The English is of the best, and so is the rhythm, which is here free from metre; there is the true lyrical movement of prose:

> And as they stood in the leaden morning, stricken with pity, leaning hard against the wind, their breath and vision often failing as the sleet and spray rushed at them from the ever forming and dissolving mountains of sea, and as the wool which was a part of the vessel's cargo blew in with the salt foam and remained upon the land when the foam melted, they saw the ship's life-boat put off from one of the heaps of wreck; and first, there were three men in her, and in a moment she capsized, and there were but two; and again, she was struck by a vast mass of water, and there was but one; and again, she was thrown bottom upward, and that one, with his arm struck through the broken planks and waving as if for the help that could never reach him, went down into the deep.

Beside this, the loaded storm-effect in *Martin Chuzzlewit* is mere stage-lycopodium and beating of trays for the generation of thunder. The witnesses of the wreck are part of the scene, the emotion is not forced into it: nor again is it, like so many of Dickens's scenes, or even like whole books of his later life, *composed*, for good or ill, in laboured, excited adjustment to some dominant tone, whether of desolation, or of peacefulness contrasted with horror, or of sullen anger, in which nature and humanity, the scenery and the story, are supposed to accord, but where they in fact are apt to kill one another.

He does best when such scenes are charged with his early recollections. Trollope's cathedral towns, unless it be in *The Warden*, are not realised as places; the author confesses that he knew them little. And it is of interest to compare the 'Uncommercial's' visit to Rochester and its childish memories with the studious picture of the same city, as 'Cloisterham,' in *Edwin Drood*—of its pottering quiet, its summer sleep disturbed by nightmares, and its humours, whether grim or merely ladylike. No doubt the powers of Dickens in the direction of elaborate painting were nearing the consummate, when he died.

Of London, his chosen ground, he does not so often represent

the beautiful or idyllic aspects, though they are to be found in the city, to which he often comes back, and in the Inns of Court. There are patches of green terrace garden, nooks of colour among the grey stones, and fountains here and there—all part of a London now half-vanished. He knows Lant Street, and Golden Square, and every precinct of the law; watches the comic stir of the thoroughfares, or, as in *Barnaby Rudge*, their tragic disorder; and stops in unspeakable derelict spots, where the new railroad is in progress, like the 'Stagg's Gardens' of *Dombey and Son*. This wilderness is presented in his favourite way; by a hectic, yet lucid, recital of confused things, with a final pirouette of whimsical imagination:

> Here, a chaos of carts, overthrown and jumbled together, lay topsy-turvy at the foot of a steep unnatural hill; there, confused treasures of iron lay soaked and rusted in something that had accidentally become a pond. Everywhere were bridges that led nowhere; thoroughfares that were wholly impassable; Babel towers of chimneys, wanting half their height; temporary wooden houses and enclosures, in the most unlikely situations; carcases of ragged tenements, and fragments of unfinished walls and arches, and piles of scaffolding, and wildernesses of bricks, and giant forms of cranes, and tripods straddling above nothing. There were a hundred thousand shapes and substances of incompleteness, wildly mingled out of their places, upside down, burrowing in the earth, aspiring in the air, mouldering in the water, and unintelligible as any dream. . . .

He is like and unlike Balzac in his passion for 'interiors,' and explores the soul, as he records the detail, of rooms and houses, beyond all precedent. He is not so heavy, thorough, historical, or philosophical about the furniture as his greater contemporary; he traffics more, as we have seen, in the 'pathetic fallacy'—which, after all, is but a crude notation of the life that really does emanate from human handiwork; and he sees what Balzac does not, the joke of the handiwork itself. The pictures of Todgers' and of the Maison Vauquer are equally good and final; the one, however, for its kindly and faithfully-observed grotesquerie, the other for its malodorous veracity. The dwellings described by Dickens are not all as real as are the cottages of the Gargerys or of David Copperfield's aunt. Many of them are disarranged or discoloured by the author's passion for the stage. In Fagin's den, or Mrs. Clennam's habitation (in *Little Dorrit*), or the opium hell in *Edwin Drood*, the detail is all duly got up and verified, perhaps by a personal visit; but they are theatre scenes, adroit and telling, that have

strayed into a book where they ring false. This distinction cuts deeper than the mere 'properties,' and extends to the characters.

Returning out of doors, there is another kind of effect, to which Scott had shown the novelists the way, leaving that way difficult to follow. In *The Heart of Midlothian* is revealed his power of presenting the tumult of crowds in angry motion ; and in *Barnaby Rudge* Dickens—despite the usual suggestion of the boards—gets within sight of his master ; as he fails to do in *A Tale of Two Cities*, where he is plunging in the wake of Carlyle. The mob threatening the Commons and storming Newgate, the bravoes invading the Maypole Inn, are full of life and contagious excitement. Dickens catches the stress and fever of these masses, and their corporate madness, and yet he is steadied by his historical subject. He also loves a hue and cry ; but there is a touch of hysteria in the story of the pursuit of Sikes or Jonas ; it is, unfortunately, what is called 'powerful writing,' and it brings us back to the gifts and perils of Dickens the public reader, with his sensational stage and its *dramatis personæ*—all of them, as Carlyle said, 'under one hat.'

IV

And what of his persons, who beset the memory by scores or hundreds ? Here we are in the thick of the jarring impressions that Dickens produces, and have to go carefully, aeroplaning, so to say, up and down through different levels. He puts most of his force into his characters and their talk—far more than he does into plot, or incident, or even description. His people are speaking, gesturing, moving, doing, all the time ; they do not stop to analyse or be analysed. Unlike George Eliot, he has no use for psychology that clogs the action. And in watching his ways as a showman, it is well to begin with the outside, where he himself so often ended—and so rightly ended, seeing that many persons are but outside and nothing more.

The simplest method of introducing a *dramatis persona* is to be seen in the police handbill ; its aim is crudely to identify ; and the novelists had used it, all the way down from Defoe and Smollett to Scott. The *dossier* begins before the newcomer has opened his lips ; we hear of his wardrobe, from top-knot to small clothes and shoe-buckles, of his features, of his 'apparent age,' and of any visible infirmities and grimaces. But then we do not really begin to observe in this order. Even Borrow makes the same mistake. We begin with a note of colour, a twist in

the watch-chain, an impression of gait, a spark in the eye; anything will do for a focus, and the rest accumulates. We may not notice a man's shoe-buckles till he has said a good deal. Thus the novelist's description is an afterthought, referred back by illusion or convention to the first glance. Dickens did not feel this drawback, for he had his Houdin-gift of noticing everything at once. But the method leads straight on, or back, to the ancient 'comedy of humours,' wherein some one of these traits, or tricks, noted from the first, may soon become, by virtue of damnable iteration, almost the whole man, or his passport throughout the story. Yet Dickens grew less mechanical in his habits of portrayal. The account of old Arthur Gride the miser, a repugnant lay-figure in *Nicholas Nickleby*, fills out half a page, and even that of Mrs. Gamp, on her first appearance, is not worthy of the sequel. But a quarter of a century later the style is truly genial; the dress is now part of the character, an extension of the soul beyond the skin, as can be seen in the picture of Mr. Boffin:

> . . . a broad, round-shouldered, one-sided old fellow in mourning, coming comically ambling towards the corner, dressed in a pea overcoat and carrying a large stick. He wore thick shoes, and thick leather gaiters, and thick gloves like a hedger's. Both as to his dress and to himself, he was of an overlapping rhinoceros build, with folds in his cheeks, and his forehead, and his eyelids, and his lips, and his ears; but with bright, eager, childishly-inquiring grey eyes, under his ragged eyebrows and broad-brimmed hat. A very odd-looking old fellow altogether.

Using the cataloguing habit in his earlier books pretty steadily, Dickens slowly, and with many spurts and relapses, reached his truer and nobler style of painting about the period of *David Copperfield* (1850). It is not the case that it then hardened once more into stereotype; rather, he attempted a different sort of elaboration, succeeding and failing in turn. In *Great Expectations* there is much freedom, nature, and mastery in the portraits; in his last book, *Edwin Drood*, there is also mastery, but not so much freedom; the treatment has become strained, though it still remains impressive. All this may appear on studying in succession the pictures of Miss Trotwood, of Herbert Pocket, and of the Rev. Septimus Crisparkle, in the stories named. Some of Dickens's caricature-portraits of real men have reached the rank of the proverbial. Skimpole is a travesty of Leigh Hunt; but the picture of the roaring Boythorn pleased the original, Landor, who said that

Dickens had seized 'my superficial ferocity and inherent tenderness.'

The whole mazy crowd of characters falls into certain loose, shifting groups, which differ in mode of draughtsmanship and also in artistic value. Nothing need now be said in dispraise, as little can be said in defence, of the whole gang of persons of quality, nobles, fashionables, upstarts, company promoters, genteel swindlers, and so following; it is enough to remember that they belong of right to Thackeray's world. On figures like Sir Leicester Dedlock, or Mr. Merdle, it is painful to see all that trouble wasted. Nor can much be said for the leading young gentlemen, of whom two only, David and Pip, are living beings; or for their destined wives, except for David's Dora and Edwin Drood's Rosa Bud. And the melodramatic, blighted women, Miss Wade, Miss Havisham, Rosa Dartle, cumber the page. All these figures and types we could wish away; many of them are brought in to help the supposed needs of a plot which is itself obscure and embarrassing. But one class of Dickens's characters must receive a longer shrift; his criminals, to whom may be added his *patients*, or persons in whom some form of alienation, or morbid cast or mood, is conspicuous.

Through his interest in crime and in the abnormal and pathological generally, Dickens is a child of what has been termed the 'novel of suspense,' though he may not have been deeply read in it. *Melmoth the Wanderer* and *Tales from Blackwood*, and the Jack Sheppard fiction supplied by Harrison Ainsworth and others, were the public diet, varied enough, when he began to write; Lytton's *Eugene Aram* may be added. Some of the stories inserted in *Pickwick* derive from this fevered literature, and are youthfully lurid. Thenceforth, in nearly all of his books, Dickens must have villains or criminals. They are of many brands, and differ much in their relation to reality. He does not always follow the good advice he gave to a friend:

> It is remarkable that if you do not administer a disagreeable character carefully, the public has a decided tendency to think that the story is disagreeable, and not merely a fiction.

This notion may savour of the entertainer more than of the artist, and reminds us of Scott's canny eye for his public. One of Dickens's ruffians, Sikes, has caught the general fancy as a type and passed into actual parlance; so great is the power of hot, sound melodrama. There is much of the same quality in Fagin; and the superbly grotesque Quilp imposes himself

on the mind like a dream, hump, voice, malice, and all, translating at once every impish motive into a gesture, and retaining comic dignity by the apposition of Brass, the inferior demon. The unrealised Ralph Nickleby and Carker, like the wicked priest in *Barnaby Rudge* (a late scion of the old anti-papal novel), affront and bore us. Rigaud, in *Little Dorrit*, is another Adelphi figure, mustachioed intolerably. A just reader will find traces of drawing in the character of Jonas Chuzzlewit. But Uriah Heep is by no means 'carefully administered.' In the later novels, much observation and comment are expended on two intending murderers. Jasper, in *Edwin Drood*, is an unfinished portrait; his purgatory is incomplete. On Bradley Headstone, the schoolmaster in *Our Mutual Friend*, an acute remark is made:

> If great criminals told the truth—which, being great criminals, they do not—they would very rarely tell of their struggles against the crime. Their struggles are towards it. . . .

No pains are spared in tracing the struggles of Headstone towards his crime, his fierce passion and frigid manner, his dealings with his accomplice, or his teaching of his flock. But here, and with Dickens's bad men in general, the impression remains that the creature's self, or soul, is missing. As Lord Acton acutely says, 'he knows nothing of sin when it is not crime.' He himself was by no means immune from abnormal states of mind; but he was perhaps too good a fellow to understand a murderer by sheer hard labour. Or rather, he wanted the divining-rod of the creator of *The Brothers Karamazov*. He could not exhibit a deeply mixed nature; all his successful characters, great or small, are gloriously self-consistent.

But he had, we have seen, sharp, over-quickened senses, which gave a spur to his fantasy; and his brain had some ado to control itself, going at the rate it did, and needing all the discipline of his soldierly will and hard sense. A few lines written to Forster throw light on his temperament:

> However strange it is never to be at rest, and never satisfied, and ever trying after something that is never reached, and to be always laden with plot and plan and care and worry, how clear it is that it must be, and that one is driven by an irresistible might until the journey is worked out. It is much better to go on and fret, than to stop and fret. As for repose—for some men there 's no such thing in life.

This restlessness could not but influence his depiction both of outward things, and of mind and motive. At times he is like

a man who has been overdosed with a drug, and solid objects do everything but talk; it is the 'pathetic fallacy' once more, and in a new light. His early farce and fun were effortless; his early pathos, at the outset of *Oliver Twist*, is pure; but the fun and pathos come to be hard driven. It is long before they become, as in the opening of *David Copperfield*, profound and unwasteful. Then, capriciously, they fail again, and then they triumph again. We are never sure that Dickens will be right, or that he will be wrong. His unquiet temper was fatal to even excellence. But it also supplied him with keys to a strange mental underworld, and, as usual, he sometimes fitted the lock and sometimes failed, always industriously.

The best diary of his own bad dreams is found in *The Uncommercial Traveller*. Here he tells how he was haunted and made sick by the dead face that he had seen in the Morgue; of his night-walks in London; and of his imaginings during sea-sickness, when he asks 'whether it was I lying there or some other entity even more mysterious?' Indeed, he continually describes morbid or insane conditions; not always well. In *Barnaby Rudge* he misses fire when he tries to present the riots of 1780 as beheld through the dim half-wits of Barnaby himself. The visions of Mistress Affery in *Little Dorrit* jade the reader. Dickens succeeds best in *Our Mutual Friend*, when portraying the double consciousness of the drugged John Harmon, the man who feigns to be dead and watches his acquaintance in disguise from that ground of vantage. He became more and more immersed in odd psychology, as appears from the strange cases of Doctor Manette in *A Tale of Two Cities* and of Mrs. Gargery in *Great Expectations*. There is much of Dickens himself in all these studies, and something of his strength.

These beings, criminal or distraught, are by no means all equally real to us, but to Dickens they are equally real. Whether they are machine-made, or grotesquely heightened, or transcendentally imagined, he weeps and laughs with them indiscriminately. Most of them, indeed, are born—sometimes still-born—of a kind of poetic fantasy, and must be judged by its laws; whether they are painfully intrusive like Smike, or as interesting as Harmon and Headstone. Few of them are observed, Thackerayan men or women. Their varying status and authenticity are disguised by the fact that Dickens writes in prose. But the habit of inventive fantasy, along with the lyrical heightened prose begotten of it, came down from the last age, being one of the achievements, as we know, of romance; De Quincey and the essayists had justified it by

success, and so had a few of the novelists. But it has its risks when applied in the fiction that also professes to give, and does give, the comedy of ascertained life and manners. To commend such an admixture, the Elizabethan playwrights had frankly interlaced verse and prose, as convention or the mood demanded, and had made good the experiment. In the novel that would not do. So the confusion of worlds that Dickens presents is only marked by the differing levels of the prose itself; and to his English I shall return, and to the question of its inspiration and origin.

V

When we pass to the unnumbered and noble throng of the eccentrics and humourists and jesters who are the glory of his novels, and solemnly discriminate the relation of art to life in the persons of Mrs. Gamp and Mr. Micawber, and think of how Dickens might have relished so new a kind of priggery, it is less tempting to proceed. Some persons would be metaphysical about Mr. Punch. We might say that Mrs. Gamp has received eternal form, and that she so partakes of 'being' and of 'not being,' and resolves their difference better than Hegel. But in fact we need to escape from one ancient error concerning Dickens. In its most specious form, it appears to do him honour. It is said with truth that the Gamps and Wellers reveal the 'shaping spirit of imagination,' quintessentially; that they are the sublime of fantastic comedy (not that lesser thing, comic sublimity); and that they are the triumph, as Gissing put it, of an 'adroit idealism,' by which their traits are not only selected and massed, but purged of all that might simply affront or disgust, or above all weary, in the idiom of their rude far-off originals; all such dross being got rid of by an odd natural rightness of imagination. This is true of Falstaff also; and the greatest of Dickens's characters are Falstaffs and not Bobadils, not just wonderful elaborations of a humour. But the greatest are few; Mr. Pickwick, Mrs. Gamp, Sam Weller, perhaps Swiveller? Pecksniff and Micawber are of the other tribe, no doubt *in excelsis*; of Jonson's tribe, but with more zest and life and style in them, and less of book-resource and satiric roughness, than Jonson commanded. Dickens does not hate and buffet his hypocrites and pretenders (Stiggins, Chadband, Casby) except when he indulges himself with a final cudgelling and exposure. The two classes, of course, cannot be sharply severed, as the same idealising and rejecting process is

felt in both, and there are all possible hybrids. But the difference between creation and construction is always there. True creation, certainly, is commoner in the case of the minor figures, of whom no catalogue is possible.

For there is still the risk that we may overlook, not his skill in presenting, but his veracity in observing, that well-known multitude. The landladies, waiters, coachmen, schooldames, old aunts (including both Copperfield's and 'Mr. F.'s'); the domestics, mummers, clerks, small dealers, dressmakers; are not pleasing concoctions, as the cultured reader may think. 'All good,' he may say, 'and all impossible.' Not so; they are—of course with the touch of heightening and wizardry—the real lower-middle and upper-lower ranks, mostly Cockney, as Dickens knew them. The travesty is of little more than the surface; he drew them much as they were, as they are in the memory of persons still alive, and as in corners they are yet to be found, innocent of 'education,' with an unbelievable allowance of savour, and mother-wit, or mother-folly, to compensate. You must be thrown young, and on fairly equal terms, with these classes, who know not the code of the 'lady' or 'gentleman,' or who only aspire to it with an effect of comic pathos, to perceive how real they are, and how Dickens chronicles for all time their queerness and their coloured speech. This fact is fast being forgotten. Fewer people walk abroad seeing through his eyes. The real difficulty is to *see* the oddity of life, which can hardly be exaggerated. Look out, if only for a day, for persons who might walk out of or into his books, and you will find them. Miss Trotwood, and Mrs. Pardiggle the visitor of the poor, and the Pocket family, and the Wilfer family, and a hundred more, will present no difficulty. They give the pleasure of portraiture, not of caricature. Get rid of your evil caste-blindness, which is still the great eye-disease of the English, and on which Dickens operated, and you will see. You have to do with a great, fertile, truthful artist. Unsafe, no doubt, with his mob of shadows and doggedly executed failures on the other side of the reckoning. But the pleasure and the puzzle in reading him is to sort out his personages, not only from one another, but from themselves. The same man is often rigorously real, nobly fantastic, and chimerical, in a single chapter convincing and repelling the imagination. The great thing is not to patronise Dickens, or all such distinctions will be lost. It goes without saying that his frontal attacks on snobbery or pretence, attacks made in full radical war-paint, are not always successful; they tell far less than his presentment of the

huge genial throng who are outside the gentles and their pale altogether.

In one other way Dickens is of the Romantic lineage and succession. Lamb, De Quincey, and Wordsworth had each of them opened the territory of the child's dreams and fears, of his wisdom and blindness, his daring, his disproportionate vision and dawnings of the heart. The eighteenth century, until Blake came, had ignored all that. Dickens forgot nothing that he had felt in childhood or youth, and he set it down, now and then directly, but oftener and better in artistic form. The signs of this power are felt in the opening of *Oliver Twist*; its perversion is seen in the pathos, and its fidelity in the Marchioness passages, of *The Old Curiosity Shop*; its advance, still dashed with failure and the maudlin, in *Dombey and Son*; its deepest reach in *Copperfield*; its fullest inventive effort, as distinct from the gift of mellowing reminiscence, in the tale of Pip; and possibly its utmost delicacy in that of the old-young Esther Summerson, in *Bleak House*. Esther is at times the mere mouthpiece of the impatient male humourist who created her. But otherwise she stands out, in the sharpness of her sight and the timid dignity of her language, as an authentic 'portrait of a young lady.' The feminine cast of her English is unerring, like that of Little Dorrit in her two letters to Arthur Clennam; and Dickens can write his best when he is thus young by proxy.

> First, Caddy declared (and would at first declare nothing else) that I was the best adviser that ever was known. This, my pet said, was no news at all; and this, *I* said, of course, was nonsense. Then Caddy told us that she was going to be married in a month; and that if Ada and I would be her bridesmaids, she was the happiest girl in the world. To be sure, this was news indeed; and I thought we never should have done talking about it, we had so much to say to Caddy, and Caddy had so much to say to us.

VI

Dickens does not repeat himself much, and each of his amazing shows has its own colour and atmosphere. Throughout, indeed, he is the reporter and observer; and the reformer, the exposer, is never far off; and always, however much he may deal in pathos, he likes to leave a balance of geniality and laughter, or at least a happy finish for somebody. But he never mixes these components twice alike, or uses the same mould again. *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*

(1836-7) is his first real book (succeeding the *Sketches by Boz*), and it is one of the most disarming works in the world. Loosely built, it has all the plot that it needs, the one definite business being to get the hero into the Fleet and out again with due comic plausibility. This is done, and thus are discovered the author's treasures of human sympathy, and not merely of airy-grotesque invention. The plan, for the rest, is the old wandering one of Smollett, for it is all episodes. Pickwick, if we leave out the interpolated tales, is still known by heart by many persons after some eighty years' interval. Of not many novels can this be said ; of fewer still written by a youth of twenty-four ; of no other work by Dickens can it be said, except perhaps *Copperfield*. *Pickwick* is harmonious ; there is nothing in the indignation, in the kindliness, or in the tempered pathos to jar upon its comic world ; and there is little as yet of the ramping against real abuses, staged on an unreal scene, that besets us afterwards. The workhouse evils [1] shown in *Oliver Twist* (1837-8) were, or had been, real enough, and its opening chapters are in classic English. But there is an unhappy plot, which involves a melodrama ; and the thieves' den in one way, like the murder in another, destroys the credence that has been gained. These scenes belong to the repertory of the public reader, with its special laws of illusion and entertainment. There Fagin shines, like his companions. Sometimes the spirit of *Pickwick* gleams out in the book, as in the story (ch. xxxi.) of 'Conkey Chickweed, who kept a public-house down Battle-bridge way' and stole three hundred and twenty-seven guineas from himself.

A bigger canvas, a grosser handling, appear in *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-9). Much of the book is smudge or glare ; the famous satire on the schools is glare, but is all the better for that, and did its work ; in fact the farce or comedy of Dotheboys Hall is as far beyond praise as the usurer Ralph and the half-witted Smike are beyond toleration. The Crummles troupe and the other cheery eccentrics are also farce ; but it is gentle farce, and moreover it is the farce of reality. Dickens next planned his awkward periodical, *Master Humphrey's Clock* (1840-1), in which he brought back, rather spectrally, Mr. Pickwick and the Wellers ; and out of this venture sprouted two stories, *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840-1) and *Barnaby Rudge* (1841). In the former tale there is no real plan ; and it is built, rather unluckily, round the fortunes of a single idealised figure, 'the lonely figure of the child with grotesque and wild, but not impossible companions.' The

earlier dreams and terrors of Nell are described with great beauty, and do not, like her later troubles, provoke any revulsion in the reader. Dickens thought he was strong-minded in doing violence to his feelings and killing the child, but in fact he was only the more sentimental for that; and he earned universal favour accordingly. For the rest, *The Old Curiosity Shop* is rich in humours of different and even of discordant kind. The enormous comic brutality of Quilp and the Brasses is covered up, and much more than purged, by the splendour of the extravaganza; but the humaner fun of Swiveller and the Marchioness, were it less excellent, would be killed by such neighbourhood. The picture of the trampers, Codlin and Short and Mrs. Jarley, likewise, is too real to be discomfited even by their contact with the old man and child, those creatures of dream. In *Barnaby Rudge* there is much of Dickens's best and worst: landscape, townscape, mobs, nightmares and madness, melodrama, and plenty of the cruel-grotesque, in which he excels. We have said that he follows Scott, and that well; but he got up his documents; unlike Scott's, they had not fermented long in the brain. There is in the book the fever of romantic prose; and there is also, especially in the Newgate scenes, the spell of the theatre and the scene-painter. The figure of the hanged hangman Dennis would have suited Sir Henry Irving excellently. There is also a senseless travesty of Lord Chesterfield. Still, the story shows a marked and splendid expansion of Dickens's descriptive power.

Considered as a book, *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-4) is nearly as bad as it can be; incoherent, long drawn out, full of false intensity. But no matter; it lives, by virtue of Pecksniff and Gamp and Tapley, with Mr. Mould in the background, and with Mrs. Harris—one of those 'forms more real than living man,' ever in the wings. These classic personages are never silenced or abashed by the incongruous lowering atmosphere; and the boarding-house humours are observed to perfection, are not mere fantasy at all. The ghastly but specious caricature of American manners in this story had been prepared for by the author's *American Notes for General Circulation* (1842).

In 1843, as though tired of Newgate, Dickens produced *A Christmas Carol in Prose*, the precursor of *The Chimes*, *The Cricket on the Hearth*, and the like. With these may be grouped a dozen short pieces of sundry dates, including *Mrs. Lirriper's Lodgings*, *Mugby Junction*, *The Haunted House*, and *The Haunted Man*. In some of the 'Christmas' tales, full as

they are of his goodness and joviality, he whips the sentiment to death ; but *Two Ghost Stories* and their companions are capital, clear-cut essays in the popular-supernatural—a kind in which the fancy works through precise detail, and not by suggestion : Defoe, not Coleridge, being the literary ancestor. Others of these sketches are like bits of the novels, and Mrs. Lirriper is worthy of the best of the novels. Dickens is a past master of the idiom of landladies ; that of ' The Billickin ' in *Edwin Drood* (' coals *by* the fire, or *per* the scuttle ') being quite different from Mrs. Lirriper's. It is a pity he seldom put his whole strength into the short story.

Another long book, deplorable in its idea, but saved by a hundred virtues, came out in 1847-8 : *Dealings with the Firm of Dombey and Son, Wholesale, Retail, and for Exportation*—let us now and then give the full facetious titles [1] of the earliest copies. Hablôt Browne,[2] or ' Phiz,' the faithful congenial draughtsman, who has given eyes to the readers of Dickens, made a score of shots at the visage of Mr. Dombey, each of them more real than anything in the text. They are distinct, side-whiskered personages, of an arrogant cast ; in the book, Mr. Dombey is abstract Pride and Wealth, doomed to defeat. There might be the legend on this Lucifer : ' How art thou fallen from Lombard Street ! ' The various lines of action radiate from Mr. Dombey, and the other persons are planted at various social distances from him, some of them being as affronting to the reason as Mr. Carker, some as wholly lifelike as Susan Nipper, some as real—in a world only slightly fanciful—as Mrs. Pipchin or the Blimber household. The tale is really a satire on education and not on pride ; a putting-to-school of parents and instructors. A fig for genteel training, and for the Greeks and Romans, and for Gibbon, and for deportment ! Educate the heart and conscience, and the reason will look after itself. This is not quite a reasonable view ; but it had to be uttered, and it is echoed often enough in the fiction of the time ; it is also the moral of *David Copperfield*. A similar note is struck in *Pendennis* (1848-50), in *Jane Eyre* (1847), and *Villette* (1853) ; and, with a dash of obtrusive manliness, in Hughes's *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857). The next step was to educate the reason, the thinking animal, as well ; is it not written in *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859) ?

After some years Dickens finished *The Personal History of David Copperfield* (1849-50), where the story of the making of a man is told from within, by the man himself, by the author, in reminiscence which he uses freely, like clay upon the wheel.

The bad and the good teachers are described; but the true school is love and experience. There is a wonderful harmony of tone in most of *David Copperfield*; it is attained by the art which has released the writer from his own remembered troubles. He has now expressed them. The sorry home and school have served their turn if they have educated the humourist—the man, that is, who can *see* them without 'seeing them red'; all such things, indeed, may serve, if only you can survive them, and if you are tough and are Charles Dickens. The blots, or rather blanks, in this noble and genial book, which in spite of them all is a great classic, need little comment to-day. The seduction story is a sad waste of power, and so are the affairs of the Strong and Wickfield households. But, once we are clear of these tangles, we can think of few stories by Dickens, or by anyone else, so full of refreshment and humanity and changefulness, and also of veracity in drawing. Traddles and Miss Trotwood and Peggotty, however, are known truth, while Mr. Micawber (founded though he be on some filial memories) is fantastic truth, superbly conceived, and, if we think of it, triumphant through sheer mastery of diction. Mrs. Micawber is more subtly managed, but she is of the same world. *David Copperfield* is usually said to show Dickens's invention, as well as his heart and style, at their highest; but his alleged decline of power must be examined warily.

VII

In spite of editing, travelling, house-building, and public readings, Dickens wrote hard for twenty more years after *Copperfield*, producing seven solid books and many detached papers. On many of these there rests the shadow of forced labour. But the kinds of failure and success that he courted are new ones. He never again produced a figure with the large, old, comic values, the unsummoned ease, of Mrs. Gamp or Micawber. His natural high spirits sank or became more fitful. He changed his way of work and even his style of title, dropping the 'life and adventures' and the 'personal history,' and trying to make more of plot. Is his study of intrigue and of led-up-to situation or climax, a makeweight for a decay in freshness, or is it an advance in craft, betokening a really tightened hold on structure? It is both; but his experiments greatly vary in effectiveness. In *Bleak House* (1852-3) the intrigue is a laboured nothing; there is only the unity of tone, supplied by the blighting Court of Chancery,

which tells directly or otherwise on every one in the book more or less. But this unity is soon marred by the way in which different types of art, or of no-art, are jangled together ; and the effect is confusion. There is the aristocratic world, a pure fabrication ; there is that of melodrama and detectives—Inspector Bucket is the 'pure idea' of a detective, the original of many half-real copies ; there is the slum and hovel world, with the boy Jo, and his pathetic farce torn to rags ; there is the true, broad, Pickwickian comedy of the young man Guppy ; and the delicate truth of the narrative of Esther Summerson. This mixture, along with the skits on Landor and Leigh Hunt, one of whom, we saw, is genially and the other wantonly portrayed, causes discomfort, though there is much refreshment by the way. *Hard Times : For these Times* (1854) has no special plot ; it is pamphlet fiction, and full of the author's generous wrath, but is the most mechanical of his works ; the scene is the North Country, which he read up and saw, but hardly knew.

Little Dorrit (1857-8), in respect of structure, incident, painting, sarcasm, sentiment, and humour, is an epitome of the true and false in Dickens. The plastered-on fashionable scenes are dismal satire ; the foreign ones, vivid enough, fall among his travel notes, and there is an intense realisation of Marseilles heat and grime in the overture. The cruel rhetoric of old Mrs. Clennam is as stilted and painful, as the talk of 'Young John,' who writes epitaphs on his disconsolate self, and of Mrs. General, who is one of the best of Dickens's slenderer caricatures, is excellent. The population of Bleeding Heart Yard, the Plornishes, Pancks, and Nandy are all real. The tender conception of Little Dorrit herself is, alas, overmuch fingered and talked about ; while the still rarer one of the Father of the Marshalsea, with his attendant troupe, is mostly in perfect keeping. There are great riches in *Little Dorrit*. The tale has its own kind of unity, going round as it does from the Marshalsea to the Marshalsea ; and a like device appears in the next two stories. In *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) there is avowedly a new method. The plot will bear little scrutiny ; but the weight is laid on situation and incident—'the interest pounding the characters in its own mortar and beating their interest out of them.' The characters, says the author, are to be true to nature, yet 'such as the story should express more than they should express themselves by dialogue.' The jerky alternation of French and English scenes once more suggests a playwright who never came to his own. The poster-

hero, Carton, with one foot on the tumbril-edge, is the worst concession ever made by Dickens to the sentimental gallery. In the mob-scenes he does not so much imitate as adulterate Carlyle ; but this part of the book is saved by its vehemence of colouring and rapid huddling of episode on episode. Its real value, however, lies in the quieter passages—the coach-ride, the Dover inn, the musty peace of Tellson's Bank ; once again is recovered the atmosphere of old English places, now long swept away. Dickens did not carry the historical novel far, or enlarge its boundaries for others.

In *Great Expectations* (1860-1) Dickens regains his full power. Pip returns to his village, and to the memories of the splendid and sternly truthful opening in the misty marshes. At Lytton's instance,[1] the author trifled with his intuitions and put a stock happy ending in place of the natural melancholy one ; which is, however, extant. But none of his books has a better plan ; and the central theme, the return of Magwitch the convict, the unknown endower of Pip, is profoundly wrought out ; while the small and uppish, but not unteachable or graceless, nature of Pip himself is self-revealed with an art that in Dickens is unique ;—for David Copperfield, after all, has no particular character. Much of *Great Expectations* has all the truth, and no more than the violence, of life. The business of the mad lady jars with the rest, but is good in the ghastly-fantastic style, and we are reconciled to Miss Havisham by the lies that Pip tells about her (' four dogs . . . immense . . . fought for veal cutlets out of a silver basket '). In *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-5) the secret is soon and purposely given away to the reader : the identity of John Harmon with the mysterious lodger. But this interest palls, and has to be made out with bloodshed and tangled tales of lost wills ; and also with the humours of Wegg, Venus, and the Boffins. All this is excrescence, but, as often happens with Dickens, the excrescence is the best part, together with the comedies of the Wilfer household, and with the genuine horror and sombre poetry of the river scenes.

In the fragmentary *Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870) the story, remaining as it does a mystery, takes fast hold of us ; but it is not clear whether Dickens himself knew how to solve it ; a point for which the many sequels that have been essayed do not allow. If he had a rounded and watertight plot in his brain from the first, it was almost for the first time. Otherwise the story shows a growing power of portraiture,—not, indeed, in the sketch of the opium-drinking, psalm-singing

criminal, but in the lawyer, the clergyman, the schooldame, and the stonemason. The little heroine is unwontedly real, and Dickens's early Rochester memories give a delicate grace to the composition. While he was writing *Edwin Drood* he died :

> an event world-wide, a *unique* of talents suddenly extinct ; and has 'eclipsed,' we too may say, 'the harmless gaiety of nations' . . . the good, the gentle, high-gifted, ever-friendly, noble-hearted Dickens—every inch of him an Honest Man.

The speaker, Carlyle, had not always been so generous ; but, as so often happened, he came right—rather late, it is true—when speaking of the dead.

VIII

Dickens is great in many things—in portraiture, scenery, situation, drollery. The worst of him as a story-teller is not that he ravels up his plots, but that he likes to impute his own kindliness to the scheme of things, rather than to show how the events would really work out under the conditions supposed. He is swayed by his actor-manager's notions of what the public will endure in the way of an ending. It must be either good, or else, as in *A Tale of Two Cities*, grandiose. Oliver Twist is saved, Barnaby reprieved, and so on, whether the event is likely or not. This is as good as to drown the facts of life in drink. To make up, he falls back on all manner of calamities and deathbeds by the way, which are popular enough ; but he thinks he must take out the taste of them at the conclusion. Of course tragi-comedies sometimes really happen, and, what is more, they are good subjects for art ; as in *David Copperfield*, where the hero is dismissed while still young, and is well requited for his trials. But Dickens's habit of mind in these matters puts him in a different class, considered as a reporter of human affairs, from Thackeray and Balzac, because it makes us lose confidence in him. Will it be said that this is to take his puppet-show too seriously, and to apply the higher criticism to the repertory of Mr. Vincent Crummles ? No ; for Dickens is a great representer, often a great writer, 'a *unique* of talents,' and he does not ask for indulgences which imply contempt. Nor does he need them ; he recovers himself, even against Thackeray and Balzac, in fifty ways, by his humanity and geniality and truth. Three of his books suffice to establish such a claim—*Pickwick*, *David Copperfield*, and *Great Expectations* ; nay, any one of them

suffices to do so. The story of Mr. Pickwick and Jingle, the reception of David by his aunt, and the return of Magwitch to the chambers of Pip, almost suffice by themselves. Such scenes show an amazing clearness of heart and sureness of expression. They stay in the mind, while so many other scenes in Dickens show merely a great faculty working in the void and without substance and falling back on vehement words. The difference between Dickens and the creator of Becky Sharp is that he is in essence a poet, although verse is foreign to him, and although he is a poet who easily goes wrong in his prose. He is a passionate creature, ever straining towards the lyrical. When this element is controlled by his humour and his simple love of mankind, then it really tells and inspires, and then he is at his best. The pathos of Dickens is generally right when it is kept under and fairly jested with, or relieved by sheer good humour and benevolence, as two passages may show. The first is from *Copperfield* :—

> I was troubled by no misgiving that it was young in me to respond to her emotions. I had never laughed and cried in all my life, I dare say, not even to her, more freely than I did that morning.
>
> 'Barkis will be so glad,' said Peggotty, wiping her eyes with her apron, 'that it 'll do him more good than pints of liniment. May I go and tell him you are here? Will you come up and see him, my dear?'
>
> Of course I would. . . . He received me with absolute enthusiasm. He was too rheumatic to be shaken hands with, but he begged me to shake the tassel on the top of his night-cap, which I did most cordially. When I sat down by the side of the bed, he said that it did him a world of good to feel as if he was driving me on the Blunderstone road again.

The other is the scene in which Sam Weller gives his old enemy the pint of porter in the Fleet :

> 'Yes,' replied Job, 'but *these* sort of things are not easily counterfeited, Mr. Weller, and it is a more painful process to get them up.' As he spoke, he pointed to his sallow sunken cheeks, and, drawing up his coat-sleeves, disclosed an arm which looked as if the bone could be broken at a touch ; so sharp and brittle did it appear beneath its thin covering of flesh.

Here for the first time is fully seen the magnanimity of Samuel Weller and of Charles Dickens ; and the beginning of *Oliver Twist* deepens the same impression ; the English, as I have said, being noticeably pure and unforced. And this suggests another trait of Dickens as a humourist—which is his great profession after all, and his title to glory.

The best of his creatures, whether on the greater scale or the lesser, whether Pecksniffs or Gargerys, are triumphs of style rather than of character-drawing. They are there in order to *speak*; they have no real interplay with the other characters, or, if they have, it is in order to throw their own speech into relief. Nor do they truly touch the action, which is often insignificant or unreal; or again, when they do touch it, as when Mrs. Gamp assists at the exposure of Jonas, there is a dissonance. Well, the wordcraft of Dickens, the energy and keeping, the resource and wit, with which he fabricates the right style for them all, is the wonderful thing. It is never quite the language of this earth, but something better, which he has caught up and sublimed out of what he has actually heard; and is coloured too, no doubt, by some inveterate manner of his own. Needless to give examples of this gift; they are the things that everybody best remembers. 'Le style, c'est l'homme même,' is true of Dickens's personages. A minor application of this gift is seen in his use of incoherence in speech—a hard thing to manage. There is Mrs. Nickleby, who gets on our nerves as if we were her own children. But the triumph in this field is Flora Finching, with her unpalling neglect of the rules. Here 'le style, c'est la femme même'; she is introduced scented with spirits, and dowdy, and bursting with sentiment; but as the chaos of words whirls quicker, we begin to see her shrewdness of heart:

'Call it not kindness,' returned Flora, giving her an honest kiss, 'for you always were the best and dearest little thing that ever was if I may take the liberty and even in a money point of view a saving being Conscience itself though I must add much more agreeable than mine ever was to me for though not I hope more burdened than other people's yet I have always found it far readier to make one uncomfortable than comfortable and evidently taking a great pleasure in doing it but I am wandering. . . .'

Her foil and companion, 'Mr. F.'s Aunt,' the unforgettable, utters no more than one hundred and thirty-seven words, and eleven sentences, all salient, in the course of *Little Dorrit*. The diction of Mr. Micawber, of Mrs. Wilfer, of Mrs. General, of Mr. Pumblechook, or of Mr. Pecksniff, is of a different mint; they all practise varieties of what may be called domestic oratory; no two are alike; but behind them all, perhaps, lie the memories of Dickens the reporter, who had listened to speeches made in the Commons or on public occasions, and who had been bored by Gibbon, as the remarks of Dr. Blimber and

Mr. Wegg may demonstrate. Often this device drops into caricature; the philanthropic Mr. Honeythunder, in *Edwin Drood*, is the latest example. And this kind of talk, whether amusing or not, is the exact opposite of Dickens's own natural speech, as we find it in his short articles, and above all in his familiar letters, written to his family, or to Forster or Macready. These are all in the plainest manly strain; improvised comedy, dashed-off description, quick anger or sorrow. Speaking to persons less intimate, or to the public in harangues, he is less natural; just as he often is in his books. But any faults in his letters are the faults of life.

His staple, narrative English is about at its best in *Copperfield*; and a difference can be felt between his earlier and later works. In the first there is a freer, looser habit of words, good or bad, together with outbursts of sentiment and oratory, which are mostly bad. But this habit gives way, after about the middle of the century, to a more dogged effort of the pen, to something more prepared and mannered, and at times more painful. In the epilogue to *The Old Curiosity Shop* he chats, like Goldsmith, about the fates of his characters. But the opening of *A Tale of Two Cities*, or of *Edwin Drood*, shows that he had moved away from this forthright style to an odd, half-satisfactory one of his own, pure enough in diction still, but not really so good, and what painters call 'tighter.' But even then, in *The Uncommercial Traveller*, when he is speaking for himself, he comes back to himself, and to his original fountains, which arise in the eighteenth century.

IX

For that was where he got his language. He never read much, either in childhood or afterwards; but from the first he read just what was wanted for his unknown purpose. His literary ignorance has been deplored, and of course it narrowed his outlook. Speculation, poetry, ancient or foreign letters, hardly existed for him. His *Child's History of England* is a revelation of crudity. But he did read the books that opened to him, in the past, that world of English popular life which he was watching with all his eyes; and he read others which also opened the windows of the dream world and of romance. This double strain accounts for a good deal in his writing, and is to be traced in his two catalogues of his childish library. One is to be found in *David Copperfield*, the other in *The Uncommercial Traveller* (No. xv.). It consisted of stories, and he

cared for little else ; and they must be fictitious stories. Both the lists include *Don Quixote* and *The Arabian Nights*—'that 's for thoughts' ; and *Gil Blas*, which is for things. Between them, the lists further contain *Tales of the Genii*, on the one score, and, on the other, *Tom Jones* ('a child's Tom Jones, a harmless creature'), and the three chief tales of Smollett. *The Vicar of Wakefield* is also there, for idyll ; but the pathos of Dickens was little chastened by memories of Goldsmith.

It is agreed that he got his English, which for the most part is sound and good—not picked or learned, nor yet vernacular to a fault—from his conversance with these writers. It is meant for every one, in drawing-rooms, or in the backwoods ; most of it would be quite intelligible to most of the people in his own books. His vices of speech—dissolute sentiment, blank verse, and the rest—increased his vogue at the time, and carried him to the ends of the earth ; but they did so on the wings of his virtues. When his truer and higher imagination is at work, he gets the full benefit of his sound stock of language, and becomes a classic writer. The word 'mystical' may surprise in its application to Dickens, but the element is there. It is sometimes present when his characters have taken hold of him and he is describing their departure or arrival, without strain or big words. When the two old brothers Dorrit die, they are, whilst yet unburied, 'equally removed by an untravelled distance from the teeming earth and all that it contains, though soon to lie in it.' These strokes are found oftenest in *Copperfield*, and the language rises to the need. Now and then Dickens approaches the grand style. David is born at the end of the first chapter, and his aunt Trotwood has gone off in dudgeon that he is not the little girl on whose appearance she had insisted.

> No. I lay in my basket, and my mother lay in her bed ; but Betsey Trotwood Copperfield was for ever in the land of dreams and shadows, the tremendous region whence I had so lately travelled ; and the light upon the window of our room shone out upon the earthly bourne of all such travellers, the mound above the ashes and the dust that once was he, without whom I had never been.

The last phrase is like Dante, but it may possibly be an echo from Tennyson's lines *To J. S.* To be on the alert for such things, and to disengage them from the cheaper handiwork, is one of the great pleasures of the reader of Dickens ; they show the fullest reach of his soul and language, and they take us beyond the soul and language of his eighteenth-century masters.

His debt to those masters has often been reviewed. The influence of Fielding is obvious, but lies chiefly on the surface. Fielding gave Dickens a model for the portrayal of some of the things that he saw. The landlady, the ostler, the turnkey, the humours of the inn-yard and the road and the coach, are their common quarry. Of a postillion or waiter both could say —or they could say between them—' By the Lord, we knew ye as well as he that made ye.' The easy deep irony of Fielding, however, is almost absent from Dickens's farce and satire; there is not Fielding's vision—which is not unlike Chaucer's—of life as it eternally is upon the highways; but all kind of happy fantasies have come in instead. Also Fielding is economical, and only *seems* confidential; while Dickens can be wasteful, and keeps nothing back. He really gets more from Smollett—not only his delight in externals and riot, but his idiom for good plain narrative. Perhaps his healthy hatred of abuses is touched by the same influence. Smollett is loud, acrid, and iterative, especially when he describes the evils of the navy, and Dickens also tilts at a hundred worm-eaten institutions. The study of Sterne can also be noticed, in that lingering enumeration of every movement and gesture, which Dickens uses for humorous or grotesque effects. The contortions of Miggs, in *Barnaby Rudge*, take half a page to set forth. But the same effect is found in the description of Samuel Weller, when he came on Mr. Pickwick wandering about the hotel in search of his proper room:

> ' Good night, sir,' replied Mr. Weller. He paused when he got outside the door—shook his head—walked on—stopped—snuffed the candle—shook his head again—and finally proceeded slowly to his chamber, apparently buried in the profoundest meditation.

But no tale of borrowings takes us far with Dickens, who has the virtues, and who made the mistakes, of a great original. It has been found possible to repeat the mistakes. Of the virtues, one of the highest, which he shares with Browning and George Meredith, is energy—the intoxication with his own fancy, which carries us over so much dead ground easily. Another is the instinctive ' idealism ' already alluded to. This quality may run to seed, into travesty, or sentiment; it may produce the merest tract-patterns; but still it is the essence of his work, entering into all the best that he did, and harmonising his laughter which is in so many tones; covering up, if anything can, his amazing leaps from one plane of fact or fantasy to another; and saving from transience, by the power

of form, the innumerable motions towards gaiety and goodness, and also towards healthy bitterness, which he releases in the heart.

X

The alliance between Dickens and William Wilkie Collins[1] (1824-89) began about 1855; and next year, in *All the Year Round*, appeared the short stories called *After Dark*. The first of them, *A Terribly Strange Bed*, is one of the best of all the tales that depend on the craft of exciting horror without recourse to the supernatural. '*Blow Up with the Brig!*' (1859) is another example. Collins, who had already practised regular fiction (*Antonina*, *Basil*) now found his vein. His habit is to lead, with patience and infinite circumstance, on to a calculated crisis. The suspense is kept up to the last minute. Collins melodramatised some of his inventions: *The Woman in White* (1860), which deservedly made his name; *Armadale* (1866), the most involved and dexterous of all, with its ring of fierce theatric pathos; and *No Thoroughfare*, which he wrote with Dickens. He made a play, *The Frozen Deep*, in which Dickens acted; and later recast it as a story; showing in this instance that 'the play 's the thing,' and not the story. The two planned and wrote, they staged and acted, several other pieces in partnership. Both of them, as true Victorians, used fiction and the drama as a megaphone for their honest wrath against injustice and bad laws. And both dealt in the comedy of humours; but Collins, who seldom even after prayer and fasting attains to the imagination and splendid whim of his master, dresses up and agitates his puppets with the same kind of persistence. They are not often alive, but they have the trick of moving with a show of life. Count Fosco, Captain Wragge, and a few more, do live, at any rate under the footlights. The story keeps them going; we have no time to watch them too strictly, for it never fails or flags. Another inherited feature is the fondness for exhibiting crazed or feeble minds, and the laborious 'psychology' of crime. Dickens, on his part, is anxiously engrossed in his later books, as we have seen, with construction, and the legal and consecutive mind of Collins may have led him in that direction.

Collins, endowed with this sort of invention, became a master-mason in story-craft. *The Moonstone* (1868) shows his highest reach. The plot embodies an almost poetic fancy, the figures print themselves undeniably and grotesquely on

the memory, and the secret is consummately kept and disclosed. In the wake of *The Moonstone* came *Man and Wife* (1870), *The New Magdalen* (1873), and *The Law and the Lady* (1875). These are pamphlet-fiction, tilts against the English marriage law and various taboos of the time ; well-conceived, generous tracts, and all the more transitory for that reason, and yet always craftily managed as to the intrigue. Some of Collins's best situations and passages are found in these secondary tales. He wrote much afterwards (*The Two Destinies*, *The Black Robe*, etc.), of which little count can be taken.

It is unlucky that there are not more novels like *The Moonstone* in the world. For another such work we would sacrifice a hundred criminal narratives of real life. *The Moonstone* is not real at all ; it is so congruously and precisely unreal that Aristotle would have placed it high among the ' probable impossibilities ' that are the life of a fable. Not, perhaps, so high as his favourite tale of Œdipus, which does not appeal to him through its poetry. Inspiration and tragedy are not words to use about *The Moonstone*. It is for the amusement of the brain. For pure conduct it is hard to match. In *Armadale* the reader is let early into the mere secret, though not into the way in which it will fatally work out. In *The Woman in White* he is let, not so soon, into the knowledge of what has happened, but how it has happened he is not told until he reaches the confession of Count Fosco, which is given in the most dashing chapters ever written by Collins. In *The Moonstone* neither the what, nor the how, nor the whither is revealed until the last. Collins is a master of the regular gambit of the detective story ; first the ' exposition,' then the crime, then a succession of traps into which the reader falls. One false plausible clue no sooner leads him to grief than he is up again snatching at another ; till at last the true one is put into his hand. It has been hidden all along in a host of small conditions and incidents. A better eye than our own, or than any of the characters possess, would have seized it ; a super-Sergeant Cuff would have seized it. The usual mystery-maker gives the super-Sergeant no chance from the first ; has not the wit to contrive the evidence and falls back on gore and miracles. Collins is so consistent and clever that he gives a kind of pleasurable false satisfaction to the reasoning faculty.

Over other such practitioners, of the Gaboriau type, who may be named with him as layers-out of mazes, he has the advantage of being a writer. Fineness or magic of style do not come into the question ; still he is a definitely good and

resourceful writer, a kind of minor Macaulay among novelists in his clearness, his marshalling power, his use of plain words. *Miss or Mrs.?* (1871), one of his 'stories in outline,' a rapidly and concisely filled-in *scenario*, shows this, as well as Collins's other gifts, admirably. Like Macaulay, too, he iterates condemnably, and is painfully mannered, especially when he is trying to be passionate. Miss Gwilt's diary, in *Armadale*, is a case in point. But in presenting a violent scene or action, like the burning of the church with the villain inside it (in *The Woman in White*); or the chase through London by the Indians of the philanthropist who took the Moonstone; or the attempted poisoning of Armadale in the sanatorium by a lethal, regulated gas: and further, in the studious painting of sinister landscape (always, of course, with the 'pathetic fallacy' rampant) in harmony with the human scene, or as an omen and rehearsal of peril; in such achievements Collins is curiously solitary. It is staging, no doubt; but then few can manage it so well. He is also a sound, honest sentimentalist, and ready to provide a happy marriage at the last for his criminal, if repentant and a woman, like Magdalen Vanstone in *No Name*. His technique was novel, and remains interesting, if it is rather formal. He makes great parade of chronology and topography; divides up his 'books,' or acts, by periods of years; uses different narrators; traffics in letters, diaries, law reports, registers, settlements, wills; likes a fateful, lurid Prologue and Epilogue; practises in dream as presentiment, and exhibits spectres (not always rationalised); multiplies old family solicitors, blackmailers, and of course detectives, descendants of Inspector Bucket. These are familiar puppets now, and much outworn on all hands, but he plies them with infinite solemn relish and address. Wilkie Collins is much too good a writer to slight, and those who do not care for his walk of fiction deserve some pity, but not much.

How much Collins advanced his peculiar craft may be seen from two of the best stories of enigmatical crime written just before *The Woman in White*. They are worth notice still; they are *Paul Ferroll* (1855) and *Why Paul Ferroll Killed his Wife* (1860), by Mrs. Archer Clive. In *Paul Ferroll* it is clear to the reader from the first that the hero, a woman's Byronic man, a volcano covered with ice, is the real murderer; the story leads up to his confession, which he makes to save the innocent. But his motive is only vaguely indicated, and the second book, which justifies almost as much as it explains the

deed, was certainly wanted. The plot by which Ferroll is entrapped into his marriage, at the expense of his true love, a rather impossibly naïf convent girl, is plausibly put together. Collins, however, would have derided this topsy-turvy sort of composition, and would have strewn dexterous false clues everywhere. Yet Mrs. Clive does not want for address and energy; she works very hard at the business of 'painting the passions,' and the narrative carries us along. The 'passions' do not change, but their dressing, like that of the hair and beard, varies with the decade, and we can study it in books like this better, perhaps, than in greater writers. Mrs. Archer Clive strikes higher in her verse, which may as well be mentioned here. In 1842 she published *IX Poems by V*; and to these, in 1856, were added others. The whole garland is small, but it has not lost its colour, which is of a gentle grey. There is an old-fashioned finish, with something of Scott in it and something of the *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, in Mrs. Clive's workmanship: in *Venice*, and *The Valley of the Morlas*, and *The River Rea*. The little *pastiche* ballad called *The Lady*, with its ancient and infantine strain, is a success in a difficult kind. *The Queen's Ball* is remarkable. The motto is: 'I hear that one hundred and fifty dead people were invited to the ball, last Friday.' And they come; they move, unseen and unfelt wraiths, among the dancers, scanning those they have left behind, unable to reach them, and mostly sad at finding themselves forgotten: no very recondite idea this, but it is truly wrought out:

> Then on his breast the phantom rush'd,
> Her phantom hair his bosom brush'd,
> Her fond fantastic arms she wound,
> Beseechingly, his form around;
> Her airy lips his visage kiss'd;
> In vain, in vain; no thought he cast
> Back on the memory of the past,
> And she must let it go at last,
> The cherish'd hope that she was miss'd.

A poetic strain of fantasy, and one of an older stock—rooted as it is in the 'novel of terror,' or of 'suspense'—is found in the *Uncle Silas* (1864) of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814-73), the Irish journalist and novelist. Le Fanu has to the full the power of keeping the attention on the rack; there is a touch of Maturin in his gloomy fancy; and with much skill he interests us in the suffering heroine herself, a young girl with no particular brains or will-power, yet capable of courage at a

pinch. His Maud Ruthyn is a thoroughly natural creature; and the only criticism to be made is that the long-drawn-out warnings, presentiments, scares, and insults which beset her would probably have driven such a young lady clean out of her wits. Still, they do not; and the final scene of attempted murder, where, by poetic justice or luck, the horrible hag-villain, and not the heroine, suffers from the hammer-spike of the brutal assassin, is one of the best-arranged things of the kind in English fiction. Uncle Silas himself, the assassin's parent and prompter, is a somewhat made-up variety of a familiar type; he is a silvery, Mephistophelean, recluse, invalid old gentleman, who quotes French poetry and keeps an ingeniously-built death-chamber in his mansion. The other figures, the hoyden cousin, the lady of quality, the waiting-maid, have much life in them; and there is an odd dose of Swedenborgianism in the book, remarkably unlike that in Balzac's *Séraphita*. But Le Fanu's knack is to produce something of the atmosphere of supernatural dreadfulness, without ever resorting to the supernatural at all. Le Fanu writes well, though in no frugal style; and with a certain unction which keeps his story moving. He wrote other stories, one of which, as will appear hereafter, may well have supplied an idea for *Jane Eyre*.

XI

We saw that Swinburne, that acute judge of fiction, has given Collins his full due; but still more apt was his judicious praise of Charles Reade, one of those popular writers who have sometimes to be defended by the critic against superfine distaste. Reade [1] (1814-84) lived to see his great vogue overtaken by a reaction, for which there were several causes. He had gone on writing, often poorly, for years after he had written his best. He had lived into the age when subtlety of drawing, reserve of tone, a studied rarity of language, and the philosophic background were the virtues admired in the novel; and they were not Reade's virtues. Though a master of narrative, he too seldom lets the story alone, but drops into excited commentary, like an author shouting from the stalls during his own play and harassing the audience. This is mere manner; but two other features of Reade's method exposed his work to misjudgement.

In the first place he proclaimed aloud that his tales were founded on producible documents drawn from real life. He gathered, he pigeon-holed, he bequeathed for public inspection,

great files of cuttings, references, and other evidence, to which he pointed in triumph as the *pukka* brickwork of his edifice. He threw the brick at the heads of those who might question its solidity. He was somewhat mediæval in his notions of literary property. Though he did not despoil the living, he would convey a whole string of phrases from a page of Swift. It would have saved some trouble and credit to own such an obligation before he was forced to do so. Instead, Reade cried out that he had borrowed a dozen other things as well, and that his method was that of Shakespeare and Molière ; a plea which, owing to the change of taste, is not now conclusive. Still, he does not often use the very words of other authors. Manners and customs, plots and crimes and scandals, incidents of gallantry or heroism, and above all examples of cruelty or legal oppression, are the material that he draws, with perfect right, from his clippings. Reade's mass of papers seems to be no longer extant, and his ' sources ' may furnish matter yet for many a dissertation. Those of *The Cloister and the Hearth*, his masterpiece, have been partly explored.

In one sense the nature of Reade's researches and of his dependence upon them is neither here nor there. As an artist, he is simply to be judged by results, just as if he had never indicated his procedure. But our knowledge of it throws light on some habits of his craft. It would be too much to say that the ' document ' never thrusts out its obstinate dog's-eared corners through his text, or that he never swamps his effect in a mass of transcribed detail. In *The Wandering Heir* the reports of an old state trial are desperately cobbled into a delightful and promising idyll which had better have stood alone. But Reade, a hundred times, triumphs over his own documents. His dull stretches come not so much when he is using the documents as when he is declaiming by the way. By the heat of his ardent manly imagination he puts blood and life into the dead *dossiers*. He admired Zola, but his methods were fixed long before Zola had begun to publish. His best work approaches the nobler ' naturalism ' of *La Débâcle* in one way, and the cunning literalism of Defoe in another ; but the three writers labour differently at their material. The *stitch*, as housewives say, is not the same. The author of *The Memoirs of a Cavalier*, indeed, hides his stitches altogether, and also himself, with an address that Reade cannot emulate ; though he nearly approaches it in the wonderful little sketch *Jack of all Trades*, the biography of a vicious performing elephant. But to Reade's cordial warmth and to his command of the heroic

Defoe is a stranger. And if even the author of *The Cloister and the Hearth* could not have described Sédan with the epical breadth and patience of accumulated stroke of *La Débâcle*, neither did he at his worst and weakest fall into the humourless absurdities of theory that begot the monster *Fécondité*.

In the second place Reade, like Dickens and Collins, is a fighting novelist; the most vociferous, and not the least generous, of that regiment in his own time. He pillories the cruelties and abuses of the gaol, the madhouse, and the ship. No doubt these things often usurp space and deform the story; we may feel that the pamphlet-novel is out of date. But Reade gains far more than he loses by his aggressive purpose. It is just his lofty and fiery wrath against legalised crime or authorised inhumanity that kindles some of his most splendid passages. *Facit indignatio—prosam.* The sufferings of the thief Robinson and of the immured sane Hardie stir and sting the blood of the tepidest reader. In depicting these infernal phenomena Reade often recalls Hugo himself by a phrase or a flash. Indeed, he conveys so sharply the sense of torture, of the blows thudding on the flesh and spirit of the victim, that the identity of the persons is almost lost, and they become types and patterns. So with his exhibitions of the brute in power, or of the brute undergoing condign punishment. His fervour against such ill-doing often reminds us of Macaulay's, who at the age of eighteen wrote to his father:

> When I cease to feel the injuries of others warmly, to detest wanton cruelty, and to feel my soul rise against oppression, I shall think myself unworthy to be your son.

Reade began as a playwright, and produced six dramas, or melodramas, before turning to fiction. His first story, *Peg Woffington* (1853), was adapted from *Masks and Faces*, which he had written with Tom Taylor. The same pair had composed *The Lyons Mail*, the only one of Reade's dozen plays that has kept the stage. None of them exist as literature. His devotion to the theatre helps to account for the frequent glare and emphasis in his stories, and also for some of the delicacy being rubbed off from his dialogue. But the theatre also taught him to hold the reader by a well-enchained series of breathless situations and passionate adventures. 'Without sensation,' he says, 'there can be no interest; but my plan is to mix a little character and a little philosophy with the sensational element.' *Peg Woffington* is written in this spirit, and in many ways, though something of an extravaganza,

prefigures its successors. It contains a real woman, very like the historical Woffington, who dances through the scene, begins in farce, ends in serious comedy, and through all her mimicries and tempers keeps a heart of gold. Cibber is there too, and Quin, and not a little of the wit and smirk of Vanbrugh's plays without their inhumanity. In *Christie Johnstone* (1853) there is another living and breathing heroine, a Scots fisher-girl this time: and here, too, with the sea-rescue, begin those passages of physical and mortal danger, and of combat with the elements or with the brute in human nature, which would have made Reade a magnificent chronicler of war, and which afterwards are seldom absent from his page.

The production of the next five years includes Reade's first book on a large scale, *It is Never Too Late to Mend* (1856), of which the scheme and characters are to be found in the puerile drama called *Gold!* The Australian scenes, though full of life, cannot compare in authenticity with Henry Kingsley's; the clumsy villain and the glorified prison-parson are not refreshing; but Robinson and the warders save the story. One skilful chapter, of more deeply-meditated drawing than the rest, Reade cut out of the novel and published afterwards. This is the *Autobiography of a Thief*, where the mixture of bald fact, stumbling style, and illiterate rhetoric is worthy of Defoe. In another tale of this period, *Love Me Little, Love Me Long*, there is admirable storm-painting, and also feminine comedy of no mean order. But Reade reached his prime in the Sixties, with *The Cloister and the Hearth* (1861), *Hard Cash* (1863), *Griffith Gaunt* (1866), and *Foul Play* (1868). He wrote for fourteen years more, and filled half a dozen volumes with short stories or long, none of them of his best mintage, but few of them without precious metal.

In 1859 he began an historical novel called *A Good Fight*, the hero being the father of Erasmus, and produced it in *Once a Week*; quarrelled with Lewes for his editorial blue-pencillings, and suddenly wound up with a premature happy ending; and then set to again, keeping most of the old material, though with verbal filings for the better, and thriftily using it up, or spacing it out, in a story four or five times as long, which ends, not happily at all, but with proper dignity. This was *The Cloister and the Hearth*. Reade had chapter and verse for most of his reconstruction; but his manner is the open-air and living manner of Scott, not the laborious manner of George Eliot. The book is as free as anything that Reade ever wrote from pose and author's interruptions; it stands

in a different class from all else that he wrote ; the whipping and stripping of contemporary abuses is excluded ; and the time and scene were almost virgin soil for the historical novelist. In wealth of life and colour, and in variety of generous invention, *The Cloister and the Hearth* is a treasure-house. In form it is a picaresque, or vagrant, story, but not without a plan. The adventures converge, after many a winding, to the superb final situation, where the parted pair meet, with their child babbling between them. Something of strain, and something of the over-scenic, may perhaps be found in these last passages ; more of the art of the 'gradual violin' may have been required for them than was present in Reade's expansive and downright, though thoroughly noble, habit of portrayal ; but he solves the deadlock of law and circumstance fitly in the only two ways that were possible, first of all by presenting characters that are capable of rising above it, and secondly by their soon ensuing death. The child was Erasmus, to whose pictures of the time Reade acknowledges his debts.

Of Reade's other long stories none is better contrived, or fuller of life and ingenuity, than *Griffith Gaunt*, of which the time is 'full a hundred years ago.' The English is gently old-fashioned. The fox-hunt, the assizes, the country house, and the country are excellently drawn. There is a pale romantic priest, but there is also a solid, stout, and convincing one ; and there is a daring plot, on the dubious point in which Swinburne has remarked. Gaunt, a roughish squire with a streak of Leontes in him, but at first sight not otherwise basely compounded, suspects his noble wife and the pale priest. He goes off, begins to drink, and consoles himself by committing bigamy with a 'dove-eyed' Quakeress of humble birth. But all ends well, for a gentleman of title is found to marry the Quakeress, and the Gaunts are reunited. We may think that the hound and weakling Gaunt is too well rewarded ; but his lapse is made fairly credible, and it is hard to agree with Swinburne that the story is broken-backed. In this book Reade is remarkably frank for his time, and breaks down some of the canons of Victorian propriety ; and he is also perfectly clean, as usual. *Griffith Gaunt*, now little read, is one of the best tales of its kind in all our chronicle.

But Reade, as a rule, is not so strong in making a plot as he is in single scenes, situations, and even phrases. 'The captain was a patient but a tremendous man' ; 'there came out blood and other essentials' ; the event 'went through the hollow form of taking place.' But he is greatest in episodes,

like the prison-floggings in *It is Never Too Late* or the fight of Denys with the bloodhound. And there is the keeper in *Jack of All Trades*, who stabs the wicked elephant with the bloody pitchfork; and there is Jack Lambert of Glasgow, a real man, the saviour of drowning persons, who straightens himself out under water while desperate women cling to him, and who 'works to the surface.'

CHAPTER XXII

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

I

If a well-aimed blow on the brain could blot out from memory the whole of Thackeray [1] and no more, it would be like the loss of so much personal experience; we could as soon forget our aunts and uncles, or the gentlemen in the office, as we could some of his personages. He is not always agreeable, but that does not falsify the comparison; he is always asking, in effect, why he *should* be agreeable. Scott and Dickens make us forget, and Thackeray makes us remember; few novelists produce the same sort of illusion. Yet few provoke the same questionings, or the same feeling of surprised satiety, which comes on us after a long course of him. It is not that we get tired of being hit too hard; but of not being hit hard enough; nor that we want to get away into the world of poetry or fancy; on the contrary, we want to see life as it is more fully than Thackeray lets us see it. There is much for which his even unbroken scene, his even comment on the scene, does not allow at all. He does not speak, or speaks only from afar and from without, of the life of thought and art, of the exploring solitary soul, of mystical religion, or of man's impersonal hopes. In another *Comédie Humaine* we do get the sense of these things. To cavil in this way is really a tribute to Thackeray; it is to take him and his illusion seriously. A writer like Trollope—no mean writer either—does not incite us to such questions, or to demand more than he palpably offers. Only a man of quite exceptional power could cause this kind of discontent.

One common criticism passed upon Thackeray is not always fairly put. He is blamed for his trick of buttonholing and preaching at us, and not letting his story suffice. The choric passages run to commonplace; they are like dull spots on a smooth bright mirror. Perhaps Thackeray was misled by the example of Fielding; but then Fielding's comments are on the level of his story, and most of Thackeray's are not. We have

the strange sense that the recording and portraying mind is a powerful and creative one, while the reflective mind, playing upon the created scene, is of inferior quality; as though the incident and the talk came up from somewhere far within, while the comment was made by some other person of much less intelligence—somebody *reading* Thackeray. This feeling is a source of discomfort; and it is confirmed by his own references to his mode of composition. He often speaks of not knowing beforehand what his characters will say, or how the story will go on.

> 'I have no idea where it all comes from' . . . 'It seems as if an occult power was moving the pen' . . . 'I don't control my characters' . . . 'I wonder what will happen to Pendennis and Fanny Bolton.'

And so all is well when the 'occult power' is at work; but not so well when the conscious scribe begins to prose on his own account about the vanity of things, or the smallness or nobleness (as it may happen) of women, or vanished youth, or the insight of Jeames rigid behind his master's chair. Even here, of course, Thackeray can shine; and he does shine, if we view the drawback in its true light.

For imagine *Pendennis* or *The Newcomes* with all the author's lucubrations blacked out; and his worst faults will have vanished with them. Attend simply to what the Colonel, or to what Helen Pendennis, does, suffers, and says, and you will think better of them. Nor will Amelia seem mawkish, or Dobbin too dull. Freed of disquisition, the pathos of events and situations will come out the plainer. Thackeray, accordingly, is best when his narrator is an imaginary person—one of his own characters. Barry Lyndon and Denis Duval are the chorus, but they are also the main actors, and each has his own style; the dramatic power of the author is at work. Perhaps Pendennis talks too much like Thackeray himself; and Henry Esmond proses, but that is all in keeping. These narrators are most satisfactory, possibly, when they are not too virtuous—when they are braggarts, or a little vulgar.

Not to do Thackeray wrong, another distinction may be suggested. When he talks about things seen in his own person, in his letters or notes of travel or his best essays, and is no longer the showman moralising on his invented scene, he is much more natural and delightful. The point may seem superfine; but I mean that when his creative power is not at work, it is not there to put him out, and there is no incongruity

of tone. The talk of the disillusioned observer, or *censor morum*, does not appear so cheap in its context. Thackeray can be most engaging when he is simply observant, confidential, whimsical, devout, or derisory, on his own account. His drawings express his ordinary temper, in their facile queer skill and funny burlesque vision. They are numberless, and accompany most of his stories ; that they are not the best of drawings is part of the fun. They are beyond price for the understanding of Thackeray, because there is something faintly disagreeable in most of them. The text of *The Rose and the Ring* is as closely wedded to the illustrations as are the poems of William Blake ; and so is that of the *Journey from Cornhill to Cairo*, or of the *Book of Snobs*. In the long novels the effect is not so good ; the sketch is often a caricature of the passage of real life which it accompanies ; and for his greater scenes Thackeray could draw no adequate picture, not only because his pen was surer than his pencil, but because it reveals a deeper layer of his mind. The Becky of the sketches, with her sly sanctimonious grin, is a wretched little creature. Frederick Walker's illustrations, on the other hand, of *Philip* are a real translation of the text, and Richard Doyle has shown Barnes Newcome as he was.

II

The literary existence of William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-63) begins with undergraduate parodies, and its first phase, a confused and miscellaneous one, may be said to end with *The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Esq.* (1844). Some clues may be found to guide us through this mass of skits, burlesques, verses, articles, essays, reviews, travel notes, and tales. They all point, for one thing, to Thackeray's future vocation. He did not, like Fielding, linger with an alien form, the drama, and then come on his true line by a sort of accident ; although, like Fielding, he did light on it partly through the medium of parody. He is more of a *mime* than any other great English author ; a great catcher of styles and accents. Such persons, like actors who can only counterfeit other actors, seldom come to much , but Thackeray is an exception. For his mimicry shades off, and rises up, into the truly dramatic. He personates a character and a style in most of the early books that really announce his power. Backstairs English and the vulgar adoration of successful crime are the notes of *The Yellowplush Correspondence* (1837-8) ; the Newgate pamphlet and biography are the models for *Catherine* (1839-40) ; and the soul and the dialect of

clerkdom rule in that masterly tale, *The Great Hoggarty Diamond* (1841). The Munchausen-like brag in *Some Passages in the Life of Major Gahagan* (1838-9) is a dress rehearsal for the great performance of *Barry Lyndon*. *Captain Rook and Mr. Pigeon* is a 'character sketch,' half-way between story and essay, where the writer talks in his own voice.

And this he does throughout his essays and 'sketch books.' The everyday Thackeray is seen and heard without disguise in *The Irish Sketch Book* (1843), which can be compared with the early presswork of Dickens. It is full of good things, of light wit and whim, of enormous kindness, and of enjoyment. It gives a truer picture of the Irish surface than we get from all the Costigans and Lyndons. The earlier *Paris Sketch Book* (1840) is less continuous ; it is more of a string of articles and tales, some of which are historical ; *The Case of Peytel*, an affair in which Balzac entangled himself, is an example. *The Story of Mary Ancel* is also a real one, and was suggested to Thackeray by a work of Nodier's. The satirical reviews of George Sand and Charles de Bernard [1] are one-sided criticism, though some justice is done to the author of *Gerfaut* ; but they reveal clearly how Thackeray himself is determined *not* to write—not rhetorically, not with flushed sentiment, not with any complaisance towards the interesting sinner, male or female, nor, again, with a sawdusty cynicism. Of his more sombre power there are signs in the paper on *A Gambler's Death*. He had played himself, and lost, and is fond of introducing gambling-scenes, and is always at home in them. Another side of him is seen in the indignant article (not part of the sketch books) *On Going to see a Man Hanged*. He came, for a time, to disbelieve in the gallows. Thackeray's extreme good-nature is always breaking out, and is in contrast with his unrelenting delineation of facts and consequences.

This early phase of Thackeray's work merits close study ; it reflects his wandering life in London, Paris, and Germany. He speculated unluckily, and cast himself into the Press Bohemia which he describes. He had, as Carlyle said, to write for his life ; and though he managed to live, and to please the judges, his fame and livelihood were not secured until after the success of *Vanity Fair*. He had known the brief happiness, and had begun to undergo the lifelong trouble, of his marriage ; his wife became mentally ill, was forced to live away from him, and survived him. Much of his experience can be picked out of his writings ; in obscure corners, after prosing for a long time, he suddenly confides or confesses, and the page lives.

He has the true novelist's eager interest in roguery and crime; he is a connoisseur in blackguards. He likes them—both those who are pettily villainous, and those who wait for a really good occasion to offend; and also the gentleman-bravo with the grand air. He tells with relish the story of Cartouche, the arch-thief. Deuceace, one of his worst scoundrels, was studied from life, and Catherine Hayes from the records. The swindling philanthropist Brough, in *The Great Hoggarty Diamond*, and Barry Lyndon himself, are realised with a precision from which nothing can make Thackeray swerve. By the side of these figures the scenical villains of Dickens and Wilkie Collins only exist in some world of melodrama, not in Hanoverian Britain. Quilp, no doubt, is a masterpiece of fancy; Collins's Count Fosco is a stage person, impossible to forget; still we could never have met them. But Brough is of the Pecksniff tribe; and yet, being a real man, he lacks the true Pecksniffian sublimity.

It is no paradox to add that this concern with real wickedness is well served by Thackeray's passion and gift for travesty or mimicry. In this he follows the good tradition that comes down from *Jonathan Wild* and from Swift's *Last Speech and Dying Words of Ebenezer Elliston*. The mock-magnificence of Lyndon, the studied literalism in *Catherine*, alike derive from such precedents. Defoe counts for something among his models. The epical diction of Fielding, or of *The Battle of the Books*, often comes up in Thackeray—most pleasantly in *The Rose and the Ring*, which is of later date, and in his burlesques and verses. This bent for parody accompanied him through life; and in its higher exhibitions it becomes a consummate imitation, as in *Esmond*, of the English of a past age.

In *The Yellowplush Memoirs*, then, we behold crime through the eyes of the wandering menial. We see it just as it is; for Mr. Jeames has no illusions, it is only his admirations that are odd. And they too fade when the criminal is shown up to the world. When the Hon. Algernon Deuceace, the biter, is bit, Mr. Jeames drops him. The final scene of retributive comedy is a wonderful invention for a writer of twenty-six, and is one of the grimmest in Thackeray. The queer spelling of Jeames may be meant to take the fine edge off our sense of baseness; but it has its own interest too, for it is not merely freakish. Much of it must represent a real dialect, which is phonetically, or at least unmistakeably, spelt. *Nex, fortn, posbill, comforable, fack, fust, instink, gnlmn, surcoats* (circuits) are examples.

In some cases, as in *McInations*, the sound is right, and the spelling is only a pleasant alternative form. Or else the pronunciation is correct, and the spelling is nearer to the sound than is the conventional spelling: so with *purquizzits*, *madgisty*, *cubbards*, *bisness*. All varieties are heard in this sentence: *Not the fowl find himself could snear more satannickly*; and in this one: *I never see a deamin yet, but I can phancy 1, a holding a writhing soal on his pitchfrock*. These are descriptions of Deuceace, and they mirror the adoration and repulsion of the speaker. The Byronic hero, it seems, has come down in the world and taken to cogging the dice, but still betrays his far-off Miltonic origins.

Catherine is based on a real old ghastly Tyburn affair, and has a sanitary purpose. It is meant to sicken the readers, young or old, of popular criminal literature, by giving them an overdose. The tale is told with a solemn mockery of the prosaic style, and the mockery seems to have been rather too good; some of the readers enjoyed the book in earnest, and others were disgusted, not seeing the intention. Certainly Thackeray has now mastered Swift's grave literal way of presenting a hideous point of view. The inverted grandeur of Fielding's *Jonathan Wild* is beyond him; but he is soon to achieve something equally hard, on a smaller scale of conception, in *Barry Lyndon*. *Catherine* is confessedly written to show up the spurious romances of the Turpin sort, which had been made fashionable by Ainsworth and his fellows. But the execution is uncertain, and the total effect somewhat ambiguous, because the chorus is always breaking in upon the squalid narrative with ironical, and even with pathetic, notes.

The History of Samuel Titmarsh and the Great Hoggarty Diamond reveals a humaner gift. It is meant as a tract or warning against bubble investments and pious rogues; but, like many a good comedy, it is not damaged by its moral, nor does the effect depend upon the moral. Titmarsh, the city clerk, becomes the accountant, and finally the ruined dupe, of the devout Brough, and drags down others in his fall; but he is otherwise a shrewd fellow, and always a good and honest one, and quite real. The high society in which he wins a queer footing is lightly drawn, but admirably. This is the first tale of any length in which Thackeray is content simply to follow nature, without resorting to the sham-heroic or the mock-vulgar. The talk of Titmarsh is naturally, harmlessly, and excellently vulgar; while the other clerks, the sweetheart,

and the old mother are not less distinct. The chapter on the dead child is an example of Thackeray's truer pathos :

> If it did not make you cry, I should have a mean opinion of you. It was written at a time of great affliction, when my heart was very soft and humble. Amen. *Ich auch habe viel geliebt.*

This was in 1841, after his family affliction. The true first-fruits of his experience were to be reaped in *Vanity Fair*; but meanwhile he swung back again to irony.

The pedigree of *The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Esq., Written by Himself* (1844)—at first called *The Luck of Barry Lyndon*—is hardly less illustrious, and somewhat more historical, than Mr. Lyndon's own. The pickpocket had been personated by Defoe, and the gallowsbird by Swift ; and the captain-robber, Wild, figures in Fielding as a symbol of worldly greatness. Thackeray has not this secondary purpose ; the book is not a parable. The records of Casanova may have suggested, in a general way, the magnificence, the braggadocio, and the luckless and lawless old age of Barry Lyndon ; but the pose is different, and Barry has neither the education nor the distinction of the great adventurer. Despite any such debts, Thackeray never created a truer original, or wrote a book fuller of sap and mental courage. The 'tragical history of the Princess of X——,' told to Lyndon by Madame de Liliengarten years after the event, is as murky as anything in Balzac. Barry himself is not the teller ; the story is too strong for Barry's habitual style, which is a wonderful piece of sustained mimicry—so complete that Thackeray must needs add some notes of his own, as though to avoid complicity with the speaker. The sense of its accomplishment, as a piece of *pastiche*, yields at the last to conviction. The slow dehumanising of Barry Lyndon, as his last compunctions vanish and he draws the rags of his dignity defiantly over his shrunken stature, may be fairly called terrible. As he declines, the bravery of his language is subtly heightened, and the resources of his euphemism outlast his fortunes. The story drags at the last, but Barry is always a master of language.

III

Barry Lyndon, then, to say the least, is a great feat of ventriloquism ; in *Vanity Fair* Thackeray speaks in his own voice ; and most notable is his sudden leap, during the three intervening years (1845-7) to the full assurance of his powers. He wrote the long and vivid *Journey from Cornhill to Grand*

Cairo, which has the same qualities as his former 'sketch books,' with more motley touches of colour. He went on burlesquing, in *A Legend of the Rhine*—another lash at romantic sentiment—and produced *Jeames's Diary*. In 1846-7 appeared, in *Punch*, *The Snobs of England*, finally called *The Book of Snobs*. This just overlapped *Vanity Fair*, and furnishes a key to the standpoint of that work. Much of *The Book of Snobs* is now only of historical interest, like old caricatures; but its rampant, rather forced comedy can still draw blood, as it did at the time. Thackeray now for the first time really captured his public; which squealed not a little, and yet felt that the satire was only too true. In *Vanity Fair* he was to exhibit, more peaceably and still more fatally, the great English caste-system and its caste-sentiment—to paint, as it were, the very air that the Briton breathed, and that half-unknowingly he breathes still. The point seems worth dwelling on, as so much of Thackeray's success as a chronicler of manners depends upon it.

In those days station, grades, and titles counted for more, and wealth without such things counted perhaps for less, than at present; but the hierarchies remain, despite numberless other changes, and essentially the code of manners and morals is the same, at any rate in the South of England. The Briton who is 'above' the working class looks up, and looks down, and looks at his social equals, in much the same way. Thackeray has one great qualification as an observer, which helps to explain the intensity of amused shame, and the loving realisation of detail, with which he watches the Fair. He has a surprising knowledge of the sheer facts of the social machinery; he has an imaginary *Peerage* and *Landed Gentry* and *Army List* in his brain, and is punctiliously accurate in the matter of pedigrees, titles, estates, inheritance, and intermarriages. As a scion of a race of Indian civilians, he knew all about that social fabric, with its pensions and precedents. The list of the honours of the lamented Marquis of Steyne is a minor case in point; a most curious acquaintance with the world was needed to weave together the real and the invented titles; and the author is as well versed in such matters as Major Pendennis himself.

Everybody knows the melancholy end of that nobleman, which befel at Naples two months after the French Revolution of 1830; when the Most Honourable George Gustavus, Marquis of Steyne, Earl of Gaunt and of Gaunt Castle, in the Peerage of Ireland, Viscount Hellborough, Baron Pitchley and Grillsby, a Knight of the

Most Noble Order of the Garter, of the Golden Fleece of Spain, of the Russian Order of Saint Nicholas of the First Class, of the Turkish Order of the Crescent, First Lord of the Powder Closet and Groom of the Back Stairs, Colonel of the Gaunt or Regent's Own Regiment of Militia, a Trustee of the British Museum, an Elder Brother of the Trinity House, a Governor of the White Friars, and D.C.L.,—died, after a series of fits, brought on, as the papers said, by the shock occasioned to his lordship's sensibilities by the downfall of the ancient French monarchy.

It is remarkable how much of Thackeray's narrative, for example in *Esmond* and *The Virginians*, is document of this kind. It all means hard study, as well as a life spent in the actual world that is described. A great social historian, perhaps, cannot graduate otherwise. The persons who know these things best are commonly those who revere or take them seriously, not those who take them as a sorry, big joke. But then Thackeray is *not* Major Pendennis ; on the contrary, he creates him. His own feeling towards the spectacle is hard to define ; but at least it has no political complexion. He has no democratic sentiment, beyond what is implied in his broad humanity ; he does not know much about the 'people,' despite his incidental kindly eye for them—apart, that is, from the lackey or parasitic class—and he is right in leaving them to Dickens. He does know Bohemia, innocent or otherwise, and, though he satirises it, there is something of its own temper in the free unreverent gaze with which he watches his proper scene. And this is the huge, complex Tory or Whig world of his day, with its insolent, almost unconscious assumption of being the best and only possible world. He is of it himself, and he knows the worst of it. But also the best ; and Thackeray's shade of sympathy with it comes out in one respect very distinctly.

He was far too close a watcher to think that its last word is snobbery. No one shows better how English social feeling does not, in the long run, rest on that. Our system does not fall, like that of the blessed angels, into so many immutable and ordered hierarchies—except in *Burke*. Rather, Thackeray taught that across all these divisions cuts the deeper one, which is determined by one historic conception : that of the 'gentleman.' This he never defines, as Ruskin and Newman both do so well ; but he represents gentlemen instead. He finds that they are rare ; he usually finds just one, in each of his major works, after ranging uneasily and sadly through his vast invented population. There are Dobbin, Warrington the

barrister, Colonel Newcome, Esmond, George Warrington the Virginian, and perhaps Philip Firmin. Against these the rest are measured. Then there are the 'snobs': those who 'meanly admire mean things,' and who vainly seek, whatever their nominal rank, to be or to seem gentlemen. They include the fawning clergy, tutors, or dominies, and also the wealthy *parvenus*, with an infinite mob of other aspirants; and further those who are content indeed not to be gentlemen, but who live in the radiance of those whom they opine to be such. They vary from the Waggs and Wenhams to the Jeameses, and they defy counting. Lastly, there are those who are not, and do not expect or want to be, gentlemen, and who simply know their place and are in nowise abject. They are not in the foreground, and are not so numerous; as I said, Thackeray does not attend so much to them, though he treats them genially.

His English gentlemen are mostly a little dull, and are all the more real for that. They are noble natures, they are apt to make some big silent sacrifice, for which they may or may not be rewarded upon earth. They are also apt to be a trifle absurd, especially in the eyes of women; but even this trait goes to their credit. Don Quixote's descendants have an attraction for Thackeray, and he seldom fails to make us believe in them. They are his consolation; he falls back on them when the motley show which he has imagined gets upon his nerves. His scope in portraying them is not so wide as that of George Meredith; he has no tough old English types like Mr. Everard Romfrey, no Welsh gentleman like Merthyr Powys. But the actual features of these persons are blurred in the accompanying spray of epigram; and we miss Thackeray's cool, sharp faithful outline. I will not begin to discuss his ladies as a class, for a class they are not; even the good ones, even the dull ones, have no more than a family likeness.

IV

In *Vanity Fair* there is a variation on the old Hogarthian formula of the 'adventurer's progress.' The resilient Becky is in the end left provided for, and a patroness of good works; she does not go under. There were good reasons for this procedure. A disastrous ending, for one thing, would have been less ironical; and for another, it would have shown ingratitude in the author to the personage who keeps the story together. Every booth in the Fair is visited, every inhabitant is disturbed, by Becky. Without her, few of the men or women

would be, or would have shown themselves, what they are. She brings the confused passages of their lives into some unity; she is the fiddlebow sweeping the loose sand into a pattern; and she must not be wholly broken.

It is a great performance; but is Becky quite alive herself? The answer to this heretical question is not so easy. In some ways she is very much alive. We see her grow up, and grow oldish, through four or five of the seven ages of woman, and she is always and yet never the same. Like Milton's hero, she has sparse redeeming moments, which are carefully chronicled, so that we remember each occasion when Becky is almost good, and give her more credit than we do to those who are good without effort. And 'she is always great when a great occasion is presented to' her;—never more so than when she makes the match between Amelia and Dobbin, tossing down the *billet-doux* that she had received from the late George Osborne on the eve of Waterloo. Yet it is hard to accept her unreservedly. For one thing, her abject flatteries and crawlings suit ill with her peculiar cynicism and with her despotic will and pluck. Nor do we often get inside her mind; she has few soliloquies; and Thackeray himself seems not to know, or will not tell, how far she actually sank. Probably he is willing to let us think the worst, and went as far as his public would stand in the way of plain speaking. Sometimes we wonder whether the mystery that hangs about her is the mystery of life or that of an inner vacuity, and whether she does not remain more of a marvellous invention than a true creation. It is said that she was drawn from an actual person; but that, as so often happens, is not conclusive, even if true.

The famous preface, in which the author comes forward as the showman of the fair, does not properly express the temper of the book. This preface was written afterwards, and prefixed to the reprinted numbers. The distinction which I have made already seems to the point here; Thackeray is most himself when he lets the story go its own way and the characters speak for themselves. And *they* leave us with no mere commonplace impression of the vanity and perishableness of things. They leave the mixed enigmatical impression of life itself; the question whether life is good or bad is one not to be asked—and this is just what life makes us feel. It is a life, as I have suggested, from which many realities are omitted; but as far as it goes it is convincing. Goodness, in the end, happens to have some late luck; badness, however, is not ashamed of itself and is often very little punished. Commonness remains

its own punishment, and does not care. The comedy is of many kinds, and one of them, a grotesque but still most real kind, and ugly (as Aristotle puts it) without being destructive, reaches its summit in the figures of Sir Pitt Crawley and those about him. Another group of scenes shows Thackeray's consummate knowledge of his now vanished club and military world, with its points of honour, in the days of the duello. The author of *St. Ronan's Well* would have deeply approved, we may think, of the passage where the emissary Wenham and Captain Macmurdo prevent Rawdon Crawley from fighting the wicked Marquis, and Rawdon is 'induced to acquiesce' in the offer of a colonial governorship. There is also the good domestic comedy of the overture, though Miss Pinkerton and her girls did not at once arrest the attention of the dull public; and there is that, again, of the 'little comfortable ducal town of Pumpernickel,' founded on memories of Weimar. There are also a few famous pages in which the chronic sentimentalising of the chorus forgets itself into noble pathos; and one or two of sharply tragical or theatric power, mostly with Becky Sharp for their centre. *Vanity Fair* is by a long way the most unflagging, the wittiest, the most varied, and the most real of Thackeray's writings; the book of which he seems to have the best right to say, 'I have no idea where it all comes from.'

V

The History of Pendennis (1848-50) is the work of a man who has read *The Tatler*. The vein of youthful and rueful reminiscence, and the chivalrous but rather prolix worship of good women, remind us of Steele. The talks of Arthur Pendennis and Warrington in the Temple are essays of solid eighteenth-century texture. They are natural enough, if a little heavy; and natural, too, is the maternal fatuity of Helen Pendennis, and her jealousy (and Laura's) of the unlucky little Fanny Bolton, who had done no harm. But we care the less to bow, as we are bidden to do, at the shrine of ladies whose goodness is so uninformed and uncharitable. They, and their companion-heroines, are Thackeray's refuge, once more, from his own melancholy and weariness; but for the reader they are less of a refuge, and he gets back with relief to Piccadilly, and the backstairs, and Captain Costigan. The satire, however, is apt to run to travesty in *Pendennis*, and I suppose the French cook and the *sylphide* Blanche are almost failures. They are not unlike some of the failures of Dickens, but they jar in Thackeray's

dense and real scene, as in Dickens's more excogitated scene they might not do. *Pendennis* is much quieter than *Vanity Fair*; there is no Lord Steyne and no Brussels tumult. The level is that of town or country comedy: the scenes that remain in the memory are those in the home of the Fotheringay, and the appearance of Altamont at the dinner-party, and the encounter of 'Morgan Pendennis' with his master. The grimier shades are represented by the abject Clavering and the blackmailer, and are relieved by the Chevalier Strong, one of Thackeray's lesser masterpieces: the agent of a Clavering, he yet stands on his own feet, and cannot be disliked, hardly despised. The humours of the pressmen—a true pressgang—retain a lively historical interest, and Thackeray was here drawing at first-hand his Maginn-Shandon and the reviewer of *Spring Flowers*, Mr. Bludyer: a personage who also appears in *The Ravenswing*. There he is 'the famous editor of *The Tomahawk*'; he is 'a press bravo of considerable talent and no principle,' and further he is a 'good scholar,' and lastly (an excellent Theophrastian touch) 'he never pays, and never pardons a man to whom he owes.' Thackeray's memories of Charterhouse and Bohemia, which he works upon freely, lend a sharpness to the uneventful story of *Pendennis*. Studies from the living model are often the greatest failures of a novelist; but Harry Foker, who was drawn from life, is not only alive, but a perfect stage figure too; nor is Thackeray ever surer of hand than when he presents his Fokers, with their drawl, innocent impudence, and shrewdness; light they are, but by no means too light to count. The most finished picture is that of Major Pendennis, a dweller in the world that the author knew best. The Major is in the centre; and such as the plot is, he decides its course; he saves Arthur from the *mésalliance*, he exposes Altamont. He always rewards us; his talk is never mechanical; and he has more sense, and more real merit, than the she-sentimentalists around him.

The long, relentless *Newcomes* (1853-5), with its abundant small comedy and piteous domestic tragedy, shows some weariness of hand. The financial errors and slow martyrdom of the Quixote hero are heavily drawn out; and so are the two detestable figures who choke our enjoyment of the story. Barnes Newcome, indeed, is duly thrashed; and, criminals apart, he is Thackeray's basest character, the logical contradictory and foil of the perfect gentleman; and he is not exaggerated. But there is too much of him; and the detestable campaigning mother-in-law, who is still more incessant,

exhausts the patience. As to the Colonel, it is a tribute to Thackeray's power that he survives the emphasis which is laid upon his merits. But I cannot think that the streak of folly in his composition is introduced in a reconciling way, or that the high-wrought deathbed scene comes, as the rest of the book does come, wholly out of the real world. Perhaps the Carthusian author could not resist the final *Adsum!* The inveterate streak in Thackeray of the 'man of feeling' does not improve this otherwise noble conception. In Ethel Newcome, one of the most thoroughly English girls in fiction, we back on safer ground. But the same hand had already created Beatrix, the incalculable hard woman, with a heart somewhere, who shines and who slays less because she will than because she must.

VI

For *The History of Henry Esmond, Esq., a Colonel in the Service of Her Majesty Queen Anne, Written by Himself* (1852), had preceded *The Newcomes*. I have postponed it because the dealings of Thackeray with the eighteenth century call for notice apart. *Esmond*, in point of symmetry and plain graceful construction, is like a work of that classic time. The tale turns on Esmond's abnegation of his due title for the sake of the family he loves. The secret is known first of all to the Jesuit Father Holt, then to Esmond's unlawful dispossessor, then to Esmond himself; then, against his will, to the beneficiaries, first the mother, then the daughter, and then to others. Beatrix learns it too late. The reader does not learn it too soon. Thus all turns on our being persuaded that Esmond would behave as he does; and persuaded we are. He also proses; and Beatrix, and the Pretender, and the reader, and the author, are alike impatient with his Grandisonian side. He is all the more real for that. Dropping now and then into the first person, he tells his memoirs in his old age, beginning with his childhood. He gradually grows up, and the book suggests the passage of time with great force—this being one of Thackeray's subtler gifts. Beatrix is his redeeming folly; he was lucky, and wretched, in missing her. She cannot forgive him, because he will not let her go to the devil in her own way; but she honours his memory in her old age, in *The Virginians*. At least, a person does so who is alleged to have once been Beatrix. Her mother we are expected to see through Esmond's eyes, but in the haze of his adoration the outline wavers. For their final marriage, which has dis-

concerted many readers, Thackeray has abjured responsibility : ' they did it themselves.' What he thought of it we hardly know. The event in itself is likely enough. Nor can we ask Esmond, the chronicler, to bring out the element of strangeness in the case : the passion for the daughter transformed, or transferred, into a lover's adoration for the mother. We should feel this difficulty less, and should say nothing, if the censer were not swung so solemnly over the rites. The book contains several of Thackeray's most triumphant and masterly passages, known to all :—the two duels ; the scene where Rachel reveals the rights of Esmond to the Duke of Hamilton ; and the final discomfiture of the Pretender and Beatrix. Thackeray's old women of quality are unexcelled, and the Dowager Castlewood would save any play or story. The accessory crowd, including Tusher, Father Holt, and the young Lord Castlewood, show the fulness of invention.

The Virginians (1857-9), unlike *Esmond*, is encumbered by its plan, or want of plan. Here again the tone is that of a book of memoirs, but the shuttle moves disconcertingly between the Virginian and English scenes ; and the historical episodes, despite some eloquent sallies, are too long for romance and too compressed for history. The narrative also suffers from prolixity. Yet few of Thackeray's books are richer in curious interest and unexpected power. The rotten noble race of Castlewood, with its parasitic but engaging parson Sampson ; the flash high society, wherein Harry Warrington loses the fortune that is not his to lose ; and the Lambert family, good and simple—all are drawn with much of the ancient force. Thackeray's passion for tracking down old age without mercy appears once more in his treatment of Beatrix, now the widowed Baroness Bernstein, and previously the widow of Bishop Tusher. He has, however, evaded the transformation-scene, which is only hinted at, and which involves the darker intervening adventures of Beatrix ; so that Beatrix and the Baroness, despite all his effort to forge the links between them by innuendo, remain somewhat different persons, while each portrait is in itself magnificent. The last days of the Baroness are described in that half-Hogarthian, half-sentimental style, which is essentially an unlucky one ; and one sentence from an earlier chapter is worth it all :

> The Baroness puts a great pair of glasses upon eyes which shot fire and kindled who knows how many passions in old days.

Thackeray excels in these small touches that bring home the

pathos of a figure 'lapsed in time and passion.' Some of the historical personages, especially Wolfe and Washington and George the Second, show a Scott-like power which he had never yet fully exercised ; and so does the Virginian household, with its loyalism, its etiquette, and its despotic mistress.

The wits figure in both these stories ; it is too much to ask that even Thackeray should successfully mimic them all. We learn that Mr. Congreve made epigrams, but we would like to have heard one. Steele is genial and kind, but is shown too much as a fuddler and too little as a man of talent. The happiest of these inventions is the picture of Addison in his lodging ; the elegance, the bearing, the lepidity of speech, are perfect. So is the mock number of *The Spectator* made up by Esmond, and so are Bolingbroke's few sentences. In *The Virginians*, the story of George Warrington's heroic play, *Pocahontas*, has just the right shade of mawkishness ; for we are now in the age of Mr. Home's *Douglas*. Johnson appears again, quite as aptly as in *Barry Lyndon* ; and the tone of Chesterfield is there to the echo. Horace Walpole's letter relating the doings at Vauxhall of the 'Iroquois,' Harry Warrington, is perhaps the greatest of these feats. Thackeray's own English in *Esmond*, the Queen Anne English, has always been duly praised ; but its praise is that it is not like any known writer, but like some good undiscovered writer, of that age. In *The Virginians*, where the period is later, there are fewer old-fashioned tints in the style, except where some one is speaking ; it is mostly plain classical English.

The *English Humourists* in the celebrated *Lectures*, are avowedly discoursed of less as writers than as men ; as they figure, or might have figured, in one of the novels. They are all the more alive ; and we also see, from his descriptions of *The Spectator* or of Hogarth's drawings, Thackeray's way of mentally absorbing the pageant and humours of another time. These, indeed, are among the best pages in the *Lectures* ; for there is no criticism to go wrong. The criticism, when it comes, is a strange mixture of true notes and false. We must not, indeed, blame Thackeray for over-exalting Pope's character, which has been riddled by later inquiries. Nor could he know all that is now known of Swift. But he has to answer, in great measure, for the awe-struck, over-lurid, shuddering tone in which Swift was so long spoken of. The level-headed, rational, daylight Swift is obscured, and the element of grandeur and incalculable genius in him is thrown out of focus by over-statement. He is also, most questionably, charged with

cowardice, and in the eulogies of Addison there is a streak of exaggerated and strained sentiment, which tallies only too well with the tone of Macaulay. Both these writers assign to Addison a stamp of greatness which we reserve for different spirits altogether. Steele, as in *Esmond*, is too much the subject of condescending and affectionate apology. Thackeray has a way of unwittingly and needlessly 'letting down' those whom he wishes us to love. He is sounder when he speaks of men of his own craft of fiction. He sees, and expresses incomparably well, almost everything in Fielding except Fielding's—not very obvious—touch of the profound and universal. Sterne, as a man, we must give over to Thackeray's mercies; for the balance is fairly kept :—

> All his letters to her (Lydia) are artless, kind, affectionate, and *not* sentimental; as a hundred pages in his writings are beautiful and full, not of surprising humour merely, but of genuine love and kindness.

With Goldsmith Thackeray is in full sympathy, and does him better justice than any one has done; and his mockery is here gentle, and does not depreciate its object. Indeed, throughout these studies, he seems always to put the question that he does of Swift—'Would we have liked to live with him?' This, and not the question, 'Would we, does posterity, like to live with his books?' is his real subject. Sometimes, as in his satire on Congreve (whereof the periwigged ghost of the relentless author of *Love for Love* cannot complain), he seems to confound the two questions. He has little to say for any writer who is without heart; but he forgets that such a writer, if only he has the skill, may live a very long time.

The 'four Georges,' certainly, do not save themselves by their relationship to wit and letters, and it only remains to judge them as men and kings. As kings, Thackeray professes not to judge them; he disclaims the work of the historian; but he manages, quite honestly, to distort the character of George III. by his omissions. The Regent, no doubt, it is hard to underestimate; but the cascade of pulpit eloquence in which the critic drenches him allows insufficiently for the standard of the age and the surroundings. These, indeed, are painted black enough in the lectures; but the redeeming sides, again, are greatly ignored. The century of Berkeley and Whitefield, of Law and Cowper, of Burke and Crabbe, becomes hard to recognise. The sketch of the Lambert family in *The Virginians* helps to correct *The Four Georges*. It is

true, however, that Thackeray's subject, reading, and bent all led him to the study of the great world, of courts and anterooms, of gambling-hells and decadent persons of quality, and that he realises that world better than any novelist before or since. His accounts of the first two Georges are on the whole the fairest, and also the most humorous in the collection.

VII

There are a few good pages in the rather dreary *Lovel the Widower*, with its mob of repulsive old women ; but it is saved chiefly by the figure of the persecuted Elizabeth, another of Thackeray's finally rescued and rewarded martyrs. His last long book, *The Adventures of Philip*, also shows fatigue, but there are scenes and characters to prove that fatigue is not exhaustion. *A Shabby-Genteel Story*, written many years before, furnishes the antecedents. The cause of all the ills in both works, the fashionable Dr. Firmin, betrayer, forger, and humbug, is too like one of Dickens's laboured villains, and is made none the more real for being, so we are told, the author of important works on medicine. But his son Philip is alive, and for Thackeray is a new type of hero : an explosive, honest Englishman with plenty of courage, some brains, and less than no address. And Caroline Brandon, the 'Little Sister,' the friend of Philip and his father's victim, a good angel who drops her aspirates, is a finished and even a daring creation. Thackeray calls things by their names in *Philip* more plainly than usual, and in one scene, which is no mere melodrama, he gets well beyond his own conventions. The Rev. Tufton Hunt, the blackmailing sot, is Thackeray's worst clergyman. In order to bleed Philip for profit and revenge, he produces a bill in which Philip's name has been forged by Dr. Firmin. For Philip's sake, the Little Sister entertains Hunt, lies to him, affects to be Philip's enemy, breaks the rascal's head with her keys, *chloroforms* him, picks his pocket, burns the bill, and is applauded by the author and all the virtuous characters. Hunt's case is luckily dismissed by the magistrate, or it might have gone hard with the lady. Thackeray's youthful interest in crime and violence now serves him well, in the maturity of his power. Indeed the whole motive—the pure affection of a good woman for the son of her wronger—can be mishandled in such countless ways that only a rare and great talent could safely touch it. But no mistake is made ; everything is simple, natural, and vernacular. Nothing in Thackeray's

great, admired novels excels this trait. The old journalistic Bohemia reappears, not very refreshingly, and so do the interminable Pendennises ; but some of the minor figures, such as the kindly French landlady, Madame de Smolensk, make much atonement.

With a true instinct, Thackeray came back at the last to the historical novel of adventure. The unfinished *Denis Duval*, like *Esmond*, is a memoir set down in old age by the principal character, with whose boyhood it begins. This early portion is high tragical romance ; the figures of the distraught Countess de Saverne, of the brave but dour and half-crazy Count, and of his slayer, the deceiver Lamotte, are painted with the ' full dark brush ' that Stevenson desiderated. Thackeray's duels, like those of Dumas, are always good. The scene of this poor Catholic lady's funeral, where Dr. Barnard, the English parson, quells the bigot mob of French and English parishioners—referring alike to Roman and Huguenot, by an inimitable touch, as *foreign dissenters*—is one of the most generous things in fiction. Not less masterly is the style in which the old man Denis remembers, like Copperfield, the exact shades of dawning comprehension in Denis the boy, who was cast among these sinister events. The smuggling and scuffling scenes are not inferior. Thackeray dropped the pen in the act of describing a naval engagement with Paul Jones ; he was certainly still full of force. He left some notes that show how the story might have gone on ; and, as ever, he dug assiduously in the documents and antiquities of the time. *Denis Duval* has little plot, it is visibly a ' life and adventures ' ; and this, with all due tribute to *Esmond*, was visibly Thackeray's predestined form of fiction, and a good old one too.

VIII

In *Denis Duval*, as in *Esmond* and *The Virginians*, the language is subtly old-fashioned, though not too much so ; the English is not that of *Vanity Fair*. This gift of recovering a lost accent became second nature with Thackeray ; and it implies a fine art, of which the origins, the lower forms out of which it has quickened, lie in the region of burlesque. That element is here purged away ; but it was strong in Thackeray always. He was, as I have said, the most skilful of mimes. His power of derisively ' taking off ' particular styles and accents he manages to keep under in his long novels, where it would be out of place ; but even there it breaks out. In

Barry Lyndon, of course, it is essential; Lyndon's swagger is a new form of the old eighteenth-century mock-heroes. And the same tone comes out often in another field—in the treatment, always most finished, though at times too insistent, of the flunkey tribe. Their noble superficies was well shown by Leech at the time and by Du Maurier later; but Thackeray was the first writer to bring out the *grandeur* of the flunkey, his peacock finery of costume and spirit. This he likes to rip up, and show its dingy lining; or say rather, the coarse padding of the white-stockinged calf. 'Morgan Pendennis' is the Pure Idea, the Almighty's own idea, of a valet. We can compare the sharp exposure of this personage with the geniality of the Bath 'swarry' in Dickens. Or there is a tone of awe-struck respect; as in the picture of that other Jeames, not Yellowplush, who stood over the drunken Altamont on the Clavering doorstep:

> Not one single word more than 'Pleaceman,' did he say, but stood there in the calm summer evening, pointing calmly; a grand sight.

Thackeray often wrote his best burlesques (while still working at *Vanity Fair*) in the pages of *Punch*. In 1847 appeared *Punch's Prize Novelists*, afterwards called *Novels by Eminent Hands*; as good a batch of prose parodies as can well be found. The heroes of G. P. R. James and the sentimental rascals of the youthful Bulwer Lytton are forgotten now, but not so the originals of *Codlingsby* and *Harry Rollicker*. These gay little productions, it is not pedantic to say, are part of the great counter-attack launched by Miss Austen, Peacock, and others against certain sides of Romance;—against the tawdry or bogus picturesque, the pseudo-Oriental, the pseudo-mediæval, and the draping of cheap crime in expensive sentiment. Even Scott, whom Thackeray loved, is not immune from his mockery. *Rebecca and Rowena* (which is not one of the 'prize novels') is written in a mood of affectionate indignation with the author of *Ivanhoe*. It is a blunt affair indeed beside the small rare masterpiece of Peacock, *Maid Marian*, wherein the mediæval outlaw romance gently derides itself; but it is full of good ironic farce. And Thackeray's instinct, his protest that Rebecca really must pair with Ivanhoe, is critically sound; for though there are fresh things, and even great things, in Scott's tale, its plot is merely stagey, and is not, as a plot, of enough worth to culminate in more, or worse, than the full poetic justice, the quite happy ending, that befits its kind.

Thackeray is best when he is parodying no one in particular but lets his pen and pencil run freely into nonsense heroics. *The Rose and the Ring* (1855) might have been written as a relief from the high-strained pathos of *The Newcomes*. Shakespeare would surely have enjoyed the wicked echoes of his own blank verse, printed as prose. The draughtsman, Thackeray himself, saw all his characters precisely. Giglio and Valoroso are actual. Bulbo is markedly Hanoverian in features. The knocker-porter is an idealised Jeames in a comic Purgatory. The Fairy Blackstick of the picture is a real and pretty woman in a strait cloak. The humour of the book has no literary ancestry, and it is in some ways the purest expression of Thackeray.

IX

In his rhymes, which could be sacrificed even less than his drawings, and which harmonise perfectly with them, the mocking-bird note is heard everywhere. They are not very small in bulk; they were tossed off at all periods of his life; many of the best come suddenly amidst his prose, in a story, or in a diary of travel, while others were composed for special occasions. They form, as we know, a bright link in the chain that runs between Prior, Praed, Locker-Lampson, and Mr. Austin Dobson; and they betray as little effort as anything of the kind. There are many models; the doleful street-ballad, the romantic lay, the Tom Moore drawing-room melody, are all laid under contribution. The *Ballads of Policeman X*, however, are a new and very good variety; they are in Cockney speech, but the hand is lighter than that of Yellowplush; and the cruel vagaries of the British jury are scarified without emphasis. Thackeray's Irish ditties are also wonderfully managed as to metre. *Peg of Limavaddy*, a versified reminiscence in *The Irish Sketch Book*, is a pleasing example. Of all his ballads, the two on Catherine Hayes are perhaps the best; one is on the murderess, one upon the singer, whom Thackeray, owing to the confusion of name, was thought to have affronted.

In like manner the second of the *Willow-Tree* songs parodies the first, which yet is too good for parody and is perfect in a certain style of light-handed yet serious rhyming, not far from the best of Hood's:

> Lady, at even-tide
> Wander not near it,
> They say its branches hide
> A sad, lost spirit!

Pendennis's lines, *At the Church Porch*, embody Thackeray's own adoration of his saintly women. *To Mary* is a short passionate thing which no lyrist of the great age could have despised. It occurs among *Love-Songs Made Easy*, and so does the *Minaret Bells*. Thackeray has a startlingly nice ear, which does not fail even in the chant of Jeames to his 'Lady Hangeline.' The chime of the bells seems, but is not, an easy thing to manage :

Tink-a-tink, tink-a-tink,
How the soft music swells,
And I hear the soft clink
Of the minaret bells !

Thackeray, like Praed, is most natural when he wavers between play and sad earnest and hardly knows what he feels. His study of Béranger is not seen only in his translations. In his best-known and most beautiful things, like *The Ballad of Bouillabaisse*, *The Mahogany Tree*, and *The Cane-Bottom'd Chair*, he thinks aloud, and also attains to perfect finish. In *Ad Ministram*, the adaptation of Horace's *Persicos odi*, where the 'plain leg of mutton' supplants the 'simple myrtle,' the melancholy is absent, but the handiwork is just as good. *The White Squall*, and the medley called *The Great Cossack Epic*, tumble along in vivid Ingoldsby fashion. All Thackeray's verse gains because he does not seem to admit, or to know, that he can be a poet ; and the more it is read the better it sounds.

X

But to come back to his great and solid performance in fiction. His stock of sound and accurate social lore, in the way of genealogy, honours, etiquette, and so following, is after all nothing but implementary. It helps the plot and the general fabric ; it helps the conduct, as important to a novelist as to an epic poet, of the level parts, the parts that are apt to be dull, in a long story. There are many ways of managing this, which may be called the connective tissue. Dickens hardly troubles about it. He trusts to mother-wit and humours and pathos. His personages have no past to speak of ; they 'bob up,' like Punch and the hangman, and then down again till they are next wanted. So, except perhaps for *Copperfield*, few of Dickens's books give the impression of our dense continuous world. Scott is different ; he draws from a full and eager memory on national history and custom, sport and legend. Balzac exacts the sort of attention we pay to a cyclopædia ;

he has the fell intent of recording a whole society scientifically, and gives us documents. And he gives the antecedents of everybody at length. We get tired ; but at last, arriving at some potent scene, we are glad that we held out and are so well informed. Thackeray clearly belongs to this class of writers ; he too works up the antecedents, but in his own way. He conveys with much force the sense of a past, which is indeed far away, but which yet is—not only *was*—alive. He wants to produce this effect, and yet not to bore us. His method is an admirable one, for those who can apply it. It is to make the past amusing.

For he perfects just the manner that will make his retrospective details go down. It is rather like that of an accurate, humorous old family solicitor, who takes snuff and moralises, but who makes the hot-blooded youth, while they are themselves acting and suffering, listen to all that happened in the family before they were born. He describes the money quarrels that have left their traces, the scandals that are now ashes, and how the withered old aunts were fatal beauties in their day. We thus get, not perhaps a deeply philosophical, but a highly persuasive picture of the social fabric, of the course of the generations, and of the hard forgotten facts in which living passions may still be rooted. And the thing has to be made entertaining, or we might go to sleep. Few novelists take so much trouble as Thackeray to make it so, and to get the accent right. Usually he speaks in person ; but he is most skilful when he speaks dramatically. So ' Madam Esmond ' writes :

> I have no pride (as I showed by complying with my mother's request, and marrying a gentleman who was but the younger son of a Suffolk Baronet), yet I own to *a decent respect* for my name, and wonder how one who ever bore it should change it for that of Mrs. *Thomas Tusher*. I pass over as odious and unworthy of credit those reports (which I heard in Europe, and was then too young to understand), how this person, having *left her family* and fled to Paris, out of jealousy of the Pretender betrayed his secrets to my Lord Stair, King George's Ambassador, and nearly caused the Prince's death there ; how she came to England and married this Mr. Tusher, and became a great favourite of King George the Second, by whom Mr. Tusher was made a Dean, and then a Bishop.

That is the way to call up a thickly circumstantiated world. It would be hard to show more human nature of a sort, or to pack more truth and hint more slander, in fewer words. Only a woman could do it, and Thackeray creates her. There is a

whole page, too, for the pedigree of Sir Pitt Crawley, and another for the life-history of the incidental but most miserable Marchioness of Steyne. This note of the *memoir* is heard throughout Thackeray's novels.

It is clear that Thackeray challenges comparisons of the higher kind. But if we are to be clear as to his rank we must confront him with writers of similar aim, not with Dickens or Victor Hugo. He is of those who seek to present men, women, children, and events as they really are, in clear daylight and without chromatic fringes. This passion for seeing things truly, and the transparent style that goes along with it, and this observant humanity and breadth of scale, we find alike in Thackeray and in Tolstoy. I mean the Tolstoy of *War and Peace* (1864-9), the unconverted Tolstoy who is still an artist. Both writers have one of the great necessary gifts; their dialogue is natural, and sounds inevitable. Thackeray has his own advantages; amongst them is a far more pervasive wit and humour. It is seldom of the deep imaginative sort, but it is of the easy familiar sort which *circum præcordia ludit*. Often it runs miserably thin; but it is there. Nor is he burdened with the wrong sort of conscience or intellect. In Tolstoy a certain ethical and speculative bias is traceable from the first; for a time it is controlled by art, but later on it perverts the vision and hardens into dogma. Thackeray's purely intellectual outlook is simple. His creed, though orthodox, seems to be little doctrinal; his piety is deep, emotional, and generous; but he has no turn for abstract ideas, and does not trouble about the mental vexations of his time. He is a portrayer, not a theorist. All this may consist with excellent art, and may even be to the good; in George Eliot we see how philosophical luggage may harm a novelist.

But, after all, such art can hardly be so deep or strong as the art which, like that of Tolstoy in his good days, can really carry the luggage. We have but to look at Prince Andrey lying wounded after Austerlitz, with his sense of the secret of the infinite skies above him, and with his scorn for Napoleon who bends over him with the comment, *Voilà une belle mort*; or at Pierre, in the masonic lodge, feeling the new birth of human sympathy in his heart; to see what a world of real experience lies outside Thackeray's calculations. Nor is it simply the world of the mystical intellect. Thackeray, in his accounts of travel especially, has a few lovely and musical descriptions of scenery; but we do not expect from him an intimate sense, either physical or spiritual, of nature, and we

do not get it ; nothing like the account, in *Anna Karénina*, of Levine in the hayfield, or of the wolf-hunt in *War and Peace*.

George Meredith, too, is opulent in such things ; Thackeray is overmuch of a townsman to care deeply for them. But his treatment of passionate and primitive matter is remarkable. He is much superior to most of his British contemporaries when he touches on the tragedies of sex. He may merely skirt the topic ; but he does not fob us off with flushed and excited commentary instead of delineation. In *Philip*, and in some pages of *Vanity Fair*, the usual conventions of the novel were a good deal broken down. Still it is obvious that Thackeray, knowing the underworld well, as he must have done, was hindered by the public taste from making the most of it in his art. It was, I think, necessity rather than any prudery on his part, which we need not impute to him. But Victorian prudery has been so much reviled, that I leave it here with the single observation that its real Nemesis is *rhetoric*. The strength of Tolstoy's unfaltering step through this region, and the clear intensity of his vision, need no emphasising ; latterly, indeed, he suffered from a morbidly ascetic twist ; but not in his prime. It may be the absence of such elements—of ideas, in the larger sense, interpenetrating art ; of insight into the life of nature and the joy of contact with mother earth ; of the poetry or high tragedy of impassioned experience ;—it may be these deficiencies that cause a certain oppression in reading Thackeray, especially his longer books. There is not what the Russians, untranslateably, call ' room,' or ' spaciousness,'—a pure expanse for the eye and the spirit to range in. Instead, and wonderful in its way, there is the feeling of a crowded, complicated, mostly superficial existence, led under a low sky, lit up indeed by occasional passages of affection, piety, and self-sacrifice, but otherwise chiefly bearable if we watch it in the light of irony. It is also relieved by a few saving figures, and again by what Thackeray provides rather sparingly, namely, by signal dramatic scenes, one or two of them in every story. Irony, in these passages, turns fierce, and sentiment rises into tragic force or chivalrous grandeur, and the comedy of manners becomes very serious. The chapters of *Vanity Fair* and of *Esmond* that can thus be described need no mention ; every one remembers them. Another, in *Philip*, has been named already. There is such a scene in *Denis Duval*, when the slayer of the Count de Saverne arrives at the house of mourning :

. . . I was reading then in this fine book of Monsieur Galland which

the Doctor had given me. I had no orders to go to bed, strange to say, and I dare say was peeping into the cave of the Forty Thieves along with Master Ali Baba, when I heard the clock whirring previously to striking twelve, and steps coming rapidly up our empty street.

Mother started up, looking quite haggard, and undid the bolt of the door.

'C'est lui!' says she, with her eyes starting, and the Chevalier de la Motte came in, looking white as a corpse.

Poor Madame de Severne upstairs, awakened by the striking clock perhaps, began to sing overhead, and the Chevalier gave a great start, looking more ghastly than before, as my mother with an awful face looked at him.

'Il l'a voulu,' says M. de la Motte, hanging down his head; and again poor Madame's crazy voice began to sing.

Like many such things in Thackeray, this suggests a stage effect, but a stage effect that might very well, and really did, thus happen. It is in these places, where the narrative suddenly intensifies and he does not raise his voice, that he is strongest.

XI

All such distinctions between the clay, the rubble, the Porian marble and the Parian, in Thackeray, tend to be hidden by his good English, which gives him his smooth unbroken *façade*, and too easily keeps us quiet. Writers like Dickens warn us at once of their bad work by their bad writing. Thackeray's style is like an excellent natural elocution which covers the drop from the stronger to the weaker passages of a discourse. In mere idiom and purity, not to speak of rhythm, his language is almost as good when he has little to say as when he has much to represent. And he does not succeed, like Ruskin, in his earlier books, by surprising displays that distract the judgement. What beguiles us is his simplicity and transparency. This quality comes out in his essays, especially his latter ones, many of which were collected under the name of *Roundabout Papers*. There is often little enough in them; they expressly take the risks, *Spectator*-wise, of a petty subject —'a chalk-mark on the door,' 'Letts's Diary,' and the like; they make no pretence. They are not always the best of their kind; they are often nearer to Leigh Hunt than to Lamb. But of Lamb some few are worthy; and this is when Thackeray is reminiscent, and comes back to his own early days, as he does in *De Juventute*, with its echoes of the old pre-railroad world, of the dead Adelphi actresses, and of 'Tom and Jerry.' *Tunbridge Toys*, and some others, have the same

tone. *The Notch in the Axe* is a ghost-fantasy of an unborrowed kind; *On a Pear-Tree* is full of Thackeray's humorous curiosity concerning crime. But everywhere, whether the stuff be commonplace or no, the language is lucid, conversational without being slatternly, and in the good tradition of Addison and Goldsmith, the tradition of dateless purity and ease. It is not the worse for its long journey through the novels. The inspiration may glow or fade out, but Thackeray always *writes*.

Passages of actual greatness are rare; and that accent is seldom heard, which in Carlyle is never far away. The demands of pathos bring it out most fully. In the accounts of the death of George Osborne, or of the bereavement of Samuel Titmarsh, the style has a double excellence. It is the English that people will never cease to feel is *their* English, and not past English; and further, it has Thackeray's own special ring, which takes some recognising, because there is so little in it to catch hold of. He could imitate anybody; but no one could well mimic him. Perhaps his rhythm, to the excellence of which recent criticism has drawn attention, and which seems to be quite unstudied, is his rarest possession. Its music is individual, and is best heard not only in the utterance of thoughtful pathos pure and simple, but in some others (like the exposure of Becky) where the terrible is attained; and also in some lyrical passages:

> To save be your endeavour, too, against the night's coming when no man may work; when the arm is weary with the long day's labour; when the brain grows dark; when the old, who can labour no more, want warmth and rest, and the young ones call for supper.

Nor must the descriptions of scenery be forgotten, though they are too rare. Some of the best are found in the *Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo*. Much of the secret of the cadence lies in its varied and cunning balance, so unlike that of the Latin rhetorical species:

> The white crests of the blue waves jumped and sparkled like quicksilver; the shadows were as broad and cool as the lights were brilliant and rosy; the battered old towers of the commodore looked quite cheerful in the delicious atmosphere; and the mountains beyond were of an amethyst colour.

The commonplace describer, with 'poetic diction' in his ears, might have written 'were of amethystine hue,' or the like; or Disraeli might have done so; but the cadence would have perished.

CHAPTER XXIII

GEORGE ELIOT AND ANTHONY TROLLOPE

I

The ebb of George Eliot's [1] fame after her death in 1880 was sadly noted by the true believers. Nor was this wholly the fault of her last essays, *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, a personage most unlike that light sharp observer Theophrastus of Lesbos. *Daniel Deronda* had already cooled the public, and the writer had to pay for the zeal of her devotees. A typical eulogy was administered by Richard Holt Hutton, of *The Spectator*:

> If she cannot paint the glow of human enterprise like Scott, or sketch with the easy rapidity of Fielding, she can do what neither of them can do—see and explain the relation of the broadest and commonest life to the deepest springs of philosophy and religion.

The letters of Henry Sidgwick show how seriously George Eliot was taken, as a teacher, by some of the best minds. Edmond Scherer exalted her, but then dry severe critics are apt to go far when they once give a loose to their rare enthusiasms. Lord Acton, while making his reserves, said that she 'justly seemed the most illustrious figure that had arisen in literature since Goethe.' This judgement sounds strange enough to-day. Lord Acton was amazed, he explains, that an 'atheist,' brought up in a school distinguished by its 'ethical impotence,' should have evolved a 'new and puissant morality' which 'was even preferable in some ways to that of the current religion. It had no weak places, no evil champions, no bad purpose, to screen or excuse, unlike almost all forms of Christianity.' So George Eliot 'has little rivalry to apprehend until philosophy inspires finer novels or moralists teach nobler lessons to the mass of mankind.' Strange, ambiguous credentials for an artist! More than this is needed, if the work is to stand.

But of this admiration she was not all unworthy. Let those who are now young think of their own chief private enthusiasm, whatever it be, and let them salute in sympathy that old

far-away one of the Eighties, which is only to be comprehended by those who grew up in it. I recall without apology the fervid, overcharged view of George Eliot. She was a sibyl; she read the surface and the depths alike infallibly. *Middlemarch*, above all, was an image of life; and if it was a gloomy one, so much the worse for life. It was not merely a painting of the provincial world in the years before the Reform Act. The society which it portrayed, existing as it did just to baffle those finer souls who were condemned to move therein, was a terrible type of society at large; which was all very well if you were Mr. Brooke or Sir James Chettam, but not so well if you were Tertius Lydgate, slowly chilled by the surrounding apathy to science, and still more by a pretty, stony wife. Yet the sibyl bade the reader hope. The feelings and aspirations of Dorothea Casaubon had to be their own reward, though a Will Ladislaw was at last thrown in by a kindly or inadvertent stroke of fate. And the writer had her own consolations, though not of the ordinary kind. She had cast off the current doctrines; she had managed to 'do without opium.' The 'religion of humanity,' the voices of the 'choir invisible,' sounded in the ear, though their comfort was of a far-off and grimmish order. And then George Eliot had, or so it appeared, unique claims as a writer. Dickens often 'sat on the piano'; Thackeray (I still cite the headlong immature notion) was apt to maunder, and had no philosophy or sense of beauty; the experience of the Haworth sisters was intense but limited. But George Eliot's canvas was broad, her ideas were broader still; her people were alive and real, and innumerable; and the play of motive in her tales, the course itself of the action, revealed the spiritual issues that shape even the humblest fates.

So ardent an estimate could scarcely last, though no mean writer and no charlatan could have inspired it. Critical protests had been already heard, and some unhallowed noises. Swinburne had made a sonnet to her who (in contrast to Carlyle) had 'found, in love of lovingkindness, light'; but in prose he was less enthusiastic. In much rougher strain, the poet and journalist, William Ernest Henley, talked of the 'Apotheosis of Pupil-Teachery'; and his 'sense of sex,' so he confided to the reader, led him to deny the attributes of manhood to the 'governesses in revolt whom it had pleased her to put forward as men.' George Eliot was 'the fruit of a caprice of Apollo for the differential calculus.' Sir Leslie Stephen's book (1902) did something to restore the critical

balance, if not the old popularity or worship. Stephen's doubts and abatements were all the more forcible, that he had much sympathy with George Eliot's point of view, and himself professed a lay religion. But in truth the reaction against her fame was only one symptom of a long-brewing change that came over English thought as the century wore on. It may be briefly described as the emergence, on one side, of the cult of pure force, and, on another, as the cult of pure art. I shall return to this topic in an epilogue to the present volume; enough that an idealist like George Eliot, who declared for charity and fraternity, and was an avowed teacher, came to be at a discount. Any one who tried to bring a heavy park of ethical ordnance into the sacred territory must expect to be severely examined at the frontier, and probably to be turned back. And there was a further check to George Eliot's reputation: two other masters of fiction came into fuller view. George Meredith was her contemporary, but his wider fame was established far later than hers; and Mr. Thomas Hardy only began to publish in the Seventies. Each of these novelists saw the world of men and women more freely than George Eliot had done; and they brought into relief one of her greatest deficiencies, namely, that while exhaustively describing life, she is apt to miss the spirit of life itself. Its unashamed passion, its careless gaiety, the intoxication of sunshine—so far as she understands these things, she leaves us with the feeling that she rather distrusts them. We can but ask once more how she weathers all such criticism.

II

Mary Ann Evans (1819-80) was nearly forty years old when *Scenes of Clerical Life*, by 'George Eliot,' appeared in the *Blackwood's* of 1857. To letters she was only known as having translated Strauss's *Leben Jesu* in 1846; or rather, since this was anonymously issued, for her version (1854) of Feuerbach's *Wesen des Christenthums*, published under her own name. She was also, in Mrs. Carlyle's phrase, 'the strong woman of the *Westminster Review*,' and had a share in its direction. Here she scourged, in the old, heavy, pontifical style, first Dr. Cumming the preacher of the millennium, and then the author of *Night Thoughts*; and also, with much more sympathy, introduced Heine to the public, some years in advance of Matthew Arnold. Her true talent was discovered by George Henry Lewes, whom, in 1851, she had accepted as an un-

legalised husband, and whose buoyancy, criticism, and vigilant affection sustained her through her career as a novelist. George Eliot's equipment, when she began to write fiction, was threefold. Foremost, there was her stored observation of the men and women, of the landscape and custom, of the notions and humours, of her native Warwickshire ; and this, though enlarged by her life in London, remained her real fund of capital. Secondly, and hardly separable, there was her private experience, human and intellectual. Its note is one of conflict and distress, with the traces of which her writings are scored. But these troubles ended in the freedom of spirit which permitted her to express them, and in the strenuous pleasures of creation. She had got away from the provinces, with their social taboos, where independent thinking was suspect, and from her early evangelical training. She retained, however, a perfect and affectionate picture of it all, mixed with humour and irony, and she painted the picture. After her union with Lewes she had, so far as her nature allowed, liberty and happiness, two things that are usually incompatible. She conversed with some of the best minds of the time ; she was intimate with the scientific and rationalistic band ; yet to all appearance she was to figure in the history of literature less than Harriet Martineau. A third resource of George Eliot's, namely, her great stock of actual information, reading, and culture, was not wholly good for her art ; but did not, except in the case of *Romola*, greatly deaden it. Many of her letters, however, are strangely dull, being chronicles of her reading and of her travelling for self-improvement. The first and freshest period of her work ends with the Italian trip in 1861, which prompted the writing of *Romola* and entailed the heaviest mental strain of her life.

The *Scenes* are three in number : *The Sad Fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton*, *Mr. Gilfil's Love-Story*, and *Janet's Repentance*. It was easy for the world to see, when once it had been told, that the writer was a woman ; but the world, though not Charles Dickens, was deceived at the time. The gnomic, Johnsonian air of her reflections was deceptive ; and also, no doubt, the unfeminine air of authority with which the religious spirit, as in the case of the evangelist Tryon, was portrayed, and which may have partly been assumed in order to keep on the mask. But the drawing of saintly or erring women, of Milly and Janet, is feminine in its sympathy and severity alike. So is the gusto with which George Eliot represents the spiritual redemption of a woman by a man, a topic to which she was often to recur.

The higher qualities of the *Scenes*—their tragic grasp and their imprint of catholic sympathy—are independent of sex. *Adam Bede*, in 1859, earned a fame which was reflected back on the *Scenes of Clerical Life*. The fame was deserved, though not by the central episode of *Adam Bede*. The whole story of the betrayal of Hetty, like the portrait of the betrayer, is timid and conventional. Yet with Hetty, and not with the holy Dinah, the artistic honours rest. This is the more striking for the touch of cruelty with which the authoress visits the 'unhappy little kitten,' as she calls her. She is harder on Hetty than God or Nature (not to speak of man) could possibly be. But when Hetty tells her tale of child-murder this blemish disappears ; the pathos is almost worthy of Victor Hugo ; and the English is George Eliot's best—her earlier English, pure and crystalline. Adam Bede himself, except when carpentering and fighting, is a made-up, woman's hero. No doubt the book, in species, belongs to the religious, or sectarian species of novel, common in the period ; it is as redolent of the chapel as *The Heir of Redclyffe* is of the church ; the authoress is not, but she has been, within the fold, and she knows its dialect. This increases the historic value of *Adam Bede*, though not its attractiveness. Genius, however, it has ; it saves for us a piece of that old, vanished England, with its scents of the dairy and of the flowery copse at evening, and with its pristine housewives and labourers.

III

The Mill on the Floss (1860) is George Eliot's classic ; the sense of a task or mission, though it is present, does not here fret her talent ; the early crudities, especially those of the facetious kind, are vanishing ; the hand of the analyst is not yet too heavy. The book is in a simple key of language, as if one of Wordsworth's plain stories—and his inspiration is evident—were to be told in a prose that is not afraid of colour or cadence. Much of the childish experience that is described is known to have been built, with due artistic change, out of the author's own : the ties of the brother and sister, and the comfort found by Maggie Tulliver in the *Imitatio*, appear to be reminiscent. The humouristic aunts and the old father are of the same mint. The love-passages that follow are painful, but they can easily be censured on the wrong grounds. Maggie Tulliver is just the girl, coming fresh from books, dreams, and sorrows, to love a plausible cad. But then Stephen Guest is a shadowy and

improbable cad. In the last scene the flood that unites brother and sister solves all discords ; and George Eliot hardly anywhere else uses a symbol in this way. The presence and terrors of the flood are felt from the first in the childish dreams of Maggie. Another lyrical ballad in prose, *Silas Marner* (1861), has a tragic accompaniment which is somewhat too violent for a merely secondary interest ; but the two strains are united in the central scene where Eppie refuses her actual and clings to her adoptive father. This passage, and its diction, have a Wordsworthian plainness and strength. Nor is the poetry of avarice forgotten ; the gold is a symbol of Silas Marner's dreams and desires, and its gleam is reflected on the hair of the child who saves him from the obsession. In *Silas Marner* there are touches of the meeting-house, for which the humours of the Rainbow Inn atone. The scene is hardly more modern than Jane Austen's, while the social stratum is different ; it is the midland village of Raveloe, with its fixity, its immemorial slow customs and ideas, its fat scenery. The probabilities, certainly, are handled more in the spirit of the ballad-monger than in that of the chronicler.

The second stage lasts till 1870, and includes *Romola* (1862-3), *Felix Holt the Radical* (1866), and the poem *The Spanish Gypsy* (1868). The weight of history, theory, and preaching tells more and more on George Eliot ; and her strong and stored intelligence, though it rises to the call, cannot revive what Burke has called ' the soft green of the soul.' As though in recompense, she deals more in melodrama, good and bad, and in culminating scenes of violence. As will be shown later, she here fell in with the habit of contemporary fiction. The tendency is clear in the elaborate, exhausting tale of *Romola*, George Eliot's only historical novel. It has all the qualities of a great story—except the needful and indefinable breath of life. The authoress, in Elizabethan phrase, drained her blood with sighing over the task. Yet the result is in a high degree curious and accomplished, and sometimes splendid. The pains and skill spent on the degenerate Tito Melema, who begins as a Faun and ends as a treacherous criminal, are surprising ; and the whole plot of his relations with his benefactor Baldassarre is ingeniously enchained. Romola herself is like a painted figure by Leighton, wrought studiously and in a lofty spirit, but immobilised and half-alive. Savonarola is dissected from the authorities rather than portrayed, except when his words are directly quoted. The talk of the common people is of necessity in the nature of a feat ; although, like the scenery and pageantry, it

is vivified by George Eliot's memories of her stay in Italy. But she came back, luckily, to her English hunting-ground. In *Felix Holt*, no doubt, she has not yet well recovered the trail. The radicalism of 1833, like the Florence of Savonarola and the neo-Judaism of Deronda, has the air of being 'got up'; and the 'radical' hero is something of a lay figure. But George Eliot's humorous perception of old Tory notions is never at fault; and she is equally at home with the dissenting cleric, Rufus Lyon, and with the diction of his race. The book is built on an intricate and tiresome legal plot, and also on a question of concealed paternity, which have nothing directly to do with Felix Holt. The best figures are those of the shady lawyer and the seedy informer. George Eliot, though her touch is heavier than Thackeray's, sometimes had sharp glimpses into his favourite half-world; and Grandcourt's creature Lush, in *Deronda*, is a vivid and greasy personage. There is not much in *Felix Holt* to prepare us for the breadth and strength of *Middlemarch* (1871-2), which opens the last phase.

IV

This is almost one of the great novels of the language. A little more ease and play and simplicity, a little less of the anxious idealism which ends in going beyond nature, and it might have been one of the greatest. Some of the figures, like Ladislaw, are mere pasteboard; but there is still a dense throng of persons whom we all might have known, perhaps too well. Some of the men whose inner crises are described with most labour and travail are the least real; such are the pedant Mr. Casaubon and the banker Bulstrode. But the whole is like some piece of experience that we might wish to but cannot forget. There is no plan, but there is no confusion. The 'three love-problems' are held firmly in hand. Dorothea, Lydgate, the Garth and Vincy families, meet and part, they pair and quarrel, they suffer and resign themselves, in what the authoress well calls an embroiled medium—say a kind of birdlime—yet solidly and distinctly; and the illusion holds out. The insignificant, like Fred Vincy, are made happy; the superior natures suffer. If they prospered, there would be no story: who could write a novel about the Brownings? George Eliot insists on making such persons suffer, above all in marriage. 'Retribution,' said Lord Acton, 'is the constant theme and motive of her art.' Lord Acton did not exactly mean this in commendation; he held, himself, that 'virtue on

earth is not much happier than crime.' However that may be, the retribution, in George Eliot's last two stories, is a visitation upon matrimonial blindness or folly, and not on crime. The folly of Dorothea in choosing Mr. Casaubon is not made quite credible, and the immense pains taken in explaining it may betray a certain sense of the difficulty. But once the fact is granted, we foresee from the first the slow march of tragic disappointment. 'No one would ever know what she thought of a wedding journey to Rome.' The case is worse with Dr. Lydgate, who wishes to become a second Bichat; it is worse, because his crampfish of a wife outlives him; whereas Mr. Casaubon does die and makes room for Ladislaw. The strain of these sombre histories is relieved by the picture of the minor households, and by the invaluable Mr. Brooke, one of George Eliot's most cheerful creations. The supposed date of the story is agreeably fixed by Mr. Brooke's remarks to his secretary; he wants to keep

'independent about Reform, you know. I don't want to go too far. I want to take up Wilberforce's and Romilly's line, you know, and work at Negro Emancipation, Criminal Law—that kind of thing. . . . Burke, now—when I think of Burke, I can't help wishing somebody had a pocket-borough to give you, Ladislaw. You 'd never get elected, you know. And we shall always want talent in the House: reform as we will, we shall always want talent. That avalanche and the thunder, now, was a little like Burke. I want that sort of thing—not ideas, you know, but a way of putting them.'

He is a worthy companion to the grocer who asks whether the Reform Bill will 'enable' his widow 'to bring up six children when I am gone.' Mr. Brooke is at his best when he stands on the platform 'with the second glass of sherry hurrying in among his ideas,' and faces his own effigy, with its 'buff-coloured waistcoat, eyeglass, and neutral physiognomy, painted on rag.' *Middlemarch* is a precious document for the provincial life of that time, vaguely astir with ideas, but promptly sinking back into its beehive routine.

Daniel Deronda (1876), which unsealed the lips of the scorner, shows misguidance rather than failure of power; but the book can easily be undervalued. It is duly blamed for its excess of dissertation and dissection; and, what is worse, there seems to be a wrong twist in the moral sympathies of the great moralist. Gwendolen Harleth is another victim of folly in marriage. Her pride and humbling, her agony of helpless hatred for her husband, are drawn with bitter strength;

of all George Eliot's ladies she is the most alive. The authoress drops on her a load of brickbats, and seems to wish to leave the impression that Gwendolen deserves them. But then she does not deserve them. Her worst fault is to be handsome. She is young and rather hard, sprightly and rather domineering. We feel that she would have made better terms with the aristocratic boa-constrictor, Grandcourt. Some critics have hinted, with justice, that George Eliot's upbringing hardly qualified her to draw the Wicked *Blasé* Swell. But at all costs the young lady's moral nature must be awakened. She is almost as much tormented by her lay confessor, Deronda (who assures us that he is 'not a priest'), as by her husband. She explains how a sudden, paralysing impulse (all too human) had kept her from throwing a rope to the drowning Grandcourt. Deronda remarks that he would probably anyhow have sunk with the cramp; but he practically adds that Gwendolen must all the same treat herself as a murderess in heart and intention, and must flagellate her soul; which she duly does, and her life is broken for a time. As for the intent to murder, we know what the verdict of a French jury would have been; and it would be a more truly moral one than Deronda's. However, Grandcourt never really existed; how then, we may frivolously add, could he be murdered? One may yawn, laugh, or cry over the whole Judaic business in this novel; it has found few to praise it, in spite, as Sir Leslie Stephen pleasantly says, of 'the approval of learned Jews.' People have mocked at the enormous satisfaction shown by an English gentleman who finds out that he is a Jew:

> Feelings had lately been at work within him which had very much modified the reluctance he would formerly have had to think of himself as probably a Jew.

I would rather say that Deronda is not a Jew. He has no resemblance within or without, to a Jew good or bad. All Jews are salient; he is featureless. They love arguing, they are dialecticians even in the family circle; he preaches, no doubt with a certain taste for casuistry. His very ethics are occidental. The little boy Jacob and the thieving old sponger Lapidoth (*Schnorrer* is, I believe, the correct word) are much more satisfactory. George Eliot protested well against vulgar anti-Semitism; she studied, she appreciated, the loftier dreams of modern Israel; but she could not embody them. Yet it is not safe to leave the book unread. The old skill is there in the light sketches of the country gentry. The gambling

scene at the outset makes us hope for an honest, full-blown romance ; and some sound melodrama, some healthy violence, we do get in the scenes with Grandcourt's cast mistress and the fatal diamonds. It is singular to think of the inventress of these things enjoying walks and philosophic talks with the author of *Social Statics*.

Besides *The Spanish Gypsy*, George Eliot produced other verse, most of which appeared with *The Legend of Jubal* in 1874. The lines ' O may I join the choir invisible ' are dated 1867, and may serve as a motto for *Middlemarch*, which is written in their spirit. Not happy either as poetry or as hymnody, they yet express George Eliot's inmost faith, like the similar and earlier verses in *A Minor Prophet*. The eleven sonnets called *Brother and Sister*, which throw a pathetic light on the experience embodied in *The Mill on the Floss*, are simple and transparent, and are her nearest approach to poetry. But a certain accomplished heaviness predominates, especially in her blank verse. The elaborate *Spanish Gypsy*, which turns on the struggle in the dancer Fedalma between the call of her blood and her loyalty to a Christian lover, is unreal enough ; as to the gypsies, they talk rather like Dryden's heroes. Pleasanter in melody is the rendering of Boccaccio's tale, *How Lisa loved the King*. But George Eliot's poetry is more an act of her will than of her nature ; and it remains to speak of some of the broad features of her novels.

V

She well knew that the old Adam in us, whatever his failings, is quite a good judge of story and incident, and that these things he must have. Observation and analysis leave him unsatisfied, while admiring ; he must have ' moments,' and crises, and violence : and he is right. George Eliot takes much care to meet his wishes, and her power to do so has often been overlooked. Critics have pointed out how the use and appreciation of crime in fiction, as a mainspring of the plot, marked the age of Dickens, Wilkie Collins, and Reade ; how Dickens himself came to elaborate this interest more and more ; and how even Trollope was deflected by the same impulse, from his task of portraying archdeacons. The fight in *Adam Bede*, suggested by Lewes, is sound, but brief and unprofessional. *Felix Holt* leads up to the well-arranged moment when the prosperous gentleman finds he is the unlawful son of a brutal attorney whom he has just whipped ; and, catching

sight of himself in a mirror, sees 'the hated fatherhood asserted.' There is a high melodramatic scene in *Silas Marner*, in the passage where chance occasions the discovery of the long-murdered body. The meetings of Tito and Baldassarre in *Romola* have a similar quality. Most of these climaxes are prepared in a workmanlike way. In *Middlemarch* the interest of crime passes into that of casuistry; the moral psychologist warms to her work, and certainly rivets the attention. Bulstrode, a banker known for charities and good works, formal, repellent, and a semi-conscious Tartuffe, is blackmailed by a bad fellow, Raffles, who knows of Bulstrode's shady past, long since repented of. Raffles has delirium tremens, and Bulstrode watches him. Lydgate, the doctor, contrary to the old-fashioned medical views of the place, forbids Raffles to have alcohol. Bulstrode, after a struggle of conscience, does not 'strive officially to keep alive' the patient; but on the contrary, lets the housekeeper give a dram to the patient, who duly dies. Lydgate, though surprised at the death, signs the certificate with little ado. It seems a weak point that he should never question the housekeeper. But the bailiffs were in Lydgate's house, and Bulstrode, on the eve of the crime, had unexpectedly lent him a thousand pounds, having before refused monetary aid. But all is in vain; the shady past comes out, there is a public scandal, and Bulstrode is wrecked. People, knowing of the loan, gossip about Lydgate's motives; and he, naturally, tortures himself with the question whether, but for the thousand pounds, he would not have been more inquisitive. I dwell on this episode, for it tells us much of George Eliot. She shows a real power of pinning down a moral problem; she has a lawyer's grasp of the facts and a psychologist's vision of the motives. She loves a self-deceiver, and also relishes Bulstrode's religious lingo. She loves still more to get into the mind of Lydgate, the half-innocent accessory. She cares more for these things than for the mystery or its detection; but her carpentry of the plot is excellent. Bulstrode, it is true, is not quite alive, but he is a carefully complicated puppet. The best scene of unregenerate passion is found in *The Mill on the Floss*. Old Mr. Tulliver, like a man in a saga, cares only for his vengeance, satisfies some of it on his deathbed, and instructs his son to be unforgiving. The pledge is recorded in the family Bible—the last touch of paganism in the transaction. The ferocity, like the pathos, of dull and puzzled minds is recorded with much force.

Indeed, stupidity plays a great part in the novels, and its

presence on this earth is much insisted on. George Eliot's treatment of it varies, and may serve as one test of her powers as a humourist. She possibly becomes more acidulous as time goes on. Sometimes in the later stories to be stupid, nay even to be commonplace, is treated, if not exactly as wicked, as a fault to be visited with severe condescension. In *Middlemarch* there is a blond baronet, who is certainly no fool, since on being rebuffed by Dorothea Brooke he turns to Celia, her sharp, pretty, little sister; but who is, as certainly, ordinary. When he learns of Dorothea's engagement to Casaubon, this Sir James Chettam meditates upon it:

> Having the *amiable vanity* which knits us to those who are fond of us, and disinclines us to those who are indifferent, *and also a good grateful nature*, the mere idea that a woman had a kindness towards him spun little threads of tenderness from out his heart towards hers;

and Celia he accordingly marries. This is the sort of choric remark that gave, no doubt, some reason to blaspheme. It is too hard and heavy on the average clay. If priggery can consist with so much genius, then priggery is there. There is a trace of it in George Eliot from the first; but in her earlier works, and always when at her best, her humour is gentler and less 'superior.' Her tolerant understanding sympathy with common people is a source of her power and of her humour. It is seen at its purest in the talk of Adam Bede's mother, or of the drinkers in the Rainbow at Raveloe. It has often been wondered where she picked this up, unless she was hidden, like the lady among the Freemasons, in the clock. A Westminster Reviewer is rarely a master, and still more rarely a mistress, of tavern talk. Yet we who have the freedom of the taproom could not report it so well. But this is one of the sleights of the craft. Given the genius and observing power, the stage setting can be managed at second-hand. George Eliot's boors drinking, her 'Dutch interiors,' may be a little short of spontaneous, but they are actual. She must have had a kindly relish for tinkers and potmen to begin with. She does not patronise them; she is like a queen who is easy-going with the people, but sharp and exacting with the court ladies. George Eliot is apt to be hard on the upper bourgeois, and Trollope's light unassuming way with his parsons and lawyers is really sounder than hers. But her satire is often excellent, and also her delineation of satiric persons, like the high-nosed, high-coloured Mrs. Cadwallader in *Middlemarch*. Her true business, no doubt, is to transcribe the mother-wit of her Mrs. Poysers, or

the prejudice of her Aunt Gleggs and Pullets. They are none the worse for the touch of caricature. Such personages come from the deeper stratum of her memories, out of the reach of her reading and theorising, and emerge in the generous light of pure comedy; which is blended, in such figures as Dolly Winthrop in *Silas Marner*, with pathos and humanity.

VI

Of course George Eliot is melancholy. She is melancholy, not because she lacks the consolations of the accepted religion, for such persons are often the cheeriest of all; nor simply because she has a wide and tragic vision of the human lot. She is melancholy because of her painful, uneasy turn for analysis, because she hears what she calls, in a noted phrase, 'the roar that lies on the other side of silence'; that is, the minute, unspoken play of motive that lies behind an ordinary conversation; and also the sorrows or bewilderments of simple inarticulate persons, like Hetty Sorrel. And for this kind of analysis she has a genius; a heavy, German, relentless sort of genius, but still a genius. It is seen also in her irony and humour. In *Daniel Deronda* there are two whole pages in which the talk is thus punctuated: Grandcourt says to Gwendolen Harleth:

'You would perhaps like tiger-hunting or pig-sticking. I saw some of that for a season or two in the East. Everything here is poor stuff after that.'

'*You* are fond of danger, then?'

(Pause, wherein Gwendolen speculated on the probability that the men of coldest manners were the most adventurous, and felt the strength of her own insight, supposing the question had to be decided.)

'One must have something or other. But one gets used to it.'

'I begin to think I am very fortunate, because everything is new to me: it is only that I can't get enough of it. I am not used to anything except being dull, which I should like to leave off as you have left off shooting.'

(Pause, during which it occurred to Gwendolen that a man of cold and distinguished manners might possibly be a dull companion; but on the other hand she thought that most persons were dull, that she had not observed husbands to be companions—and that after all she was not going to accept Grandcourt.)

And so on; it is all most workmanlike, granted the characters. The man may be an unreal stick, but the girl is natural enough. The weight of the irony cannot be denied; but O, shade of

Voltaire! O, light-handed Jane Austen! George Eliot uses this method for serious, for pathetic, even for dreadful matter, and uses it with signal power. But we feel instinctively that there is something wrong with the method, and not merely with the style. If you apply to life a microscope of too high a power, you will see life wrong. When the lens is directed upon a woman, the male mind (I will speak for no other) recoils, much as Gulliver did from the maids of honour in Brobdingnag:

> their skins appeared so coarse and uneven, so variously coloured when I saw them near, with a mole here and there as broad as a trencher, etc.

We by no means object (to change the figure) to hearing the bitter truth; but let it be at the right distance for hearing distinctly. Hence George Eliot is sometimes oppressive.

But her art cannot be separated from her ethical habit of mind. I have mentioned her passion for making studies in retribution. This may have been rooted in her Calvinistic training; the crude doctrine of necessity was also preached, untheologically, by her friends at Coventry. But there was also, newly in the air, the scientific conception of law and order, as extended to the world of character. This conception, secular and rationalistic, transforms the visitations of God into the self-acting law of moral consequence, or *Karma*, in the human soul. It is a law that may be signally unjust, indeed not moral at all. The innocent suffer with the guilty, and the guilt itself may be mere blindness. The sin of Tito is that of Judas, namely, the betrayal of benefactors; the fault of Mrs. Transome is youthful impulse; the error of Gwendolen is little more than inexperience. Some at least of these personages are scourged out of all proportion. It may seem that in such a lowering picture the chance of lucky escapes hardly receives its due weight. The atmosphere, however, is relieved by flashes of ordinary or of unusual goodness. This suggests another way in which George Eliot's philosophy affects her representations.

Her notions of charity and well-doing, and the quality of her sympathy, are different from those of Dickens. They are less easy and buoyant altogether, and they are part of her creed and her self-discipline. She had herself a more than common hunger for sympathy and kindness; she made a religion of kindness—of the need of getting outside the *ego*. The Positivist cult attracted her closely, and though she never became a professed member of the body, its tenets coloured her vision of the world. For the world being a grim place full of traps, and

ready to avenge the least false moral step, some sort of loophole, some ground for hope, is imperiously wanted. George Eliot finds it in 'morality touched by emotion'; in the practice of sympathetic perception, painfully sharpened till it can detect the most silent and humble suffering, or the oddest and proudest distress. Sometimes this temper is exhibited with peculiar intensity, and never more so than in a typical passage from *Middlemarch*. The two chief actors, mere acquaintance though moving in the same world, each with a special own private trouble, meet. Dr. Lydgate is called in by Dorothea Casaubon to advise on the illness of her husband:

> He was bowing and quitting her, when an impulse which if she had been alone would have turned into a prayer, made her say with a sob in her voice—
>
> 'O, you are a wise man, are you not? You know all about life and death. Advise me. Think what I can do. He has been labouring all his life and looking forward. He minds about nothing else. And I mind about nothing else——'
>
> For years after Lydgate remembered the impression produced in him by this involuntary appeal—this cry from soul to soul, without other consciousness than their moving with kindred natures in the same *embroiled medium, the same troublous fitfully-illuminated life.* But what could he say except that he should see Mr. Casaubon again to-morrow?

The words I have put in italics seem to express the author's own habitual temper; her native or acquired oppression of spirit is in them. Still the pathos is deep and genuine. If we think that the tension of such a mood is excessive, it is best to remember that George Eliot is a woman, and that her sensibility is true to the better habit of her sex, even if it will not do for our rougher one. Some of her chapters may strike us as less like food than like medicine. But then most people are never likely to take an overdose of it. Most people are the better for a little of it; and let them try it, and profit; and then let them go and play, let them return to Scott and Dumas and gaiety and the highways of the world. Looking back, they will admit that they have visited, not merely an anxious physician, but a rare spirit, and also an artist—not a flawless or quite disinterested artist, but an artist still.

VII

The two sides of George Eliot's talent, the more and the less spontaneous, are reflected in her style. Often we exclaim that every one in her books talks well except the author. She is

surest of her diction when she is some one else. The chorus is not so good as the characters—a frequent phenomenon in fiction. Every one deplored the increase of ponderous abstract English in her later stories ; but this criticism applies, if we look closer, chiefly to the commentary and not to the dialogue. Where the latter is at fault, it is not on the score of diction, except when the speaker is himself markedly unreal. The point may be illustrated by the scene in which Gwendolen narrates the death of her husband to Daniel Deronda. This is the commentary ; the English is that of *The Methods of Ethics*, of a treatise upon cases of conscience ; it is remarkably precise :

It seemed almost certain that her murderous thought had had no outward effect—that, quite apart from it, the death was inevitable. Still, a question as to the outward effectiveness of a criminal desire dominant enough to impel even a momentary act, cannot alter our judgement of the desire ; and Deronda shrank from putting that question forward in the first instance. He held it likely that Gwendolen's remorse aggravated her inward guilt, and that she gave the character of decisive action to what had been an inappreciably instantaneous glance of desire. But her remorse was the precious sign of a recoverable nature. . . . Deronda could not utter one word to diminish that sacred aversion to her worst self. . . .

What Gwendolen actually says is this :

' " The rope ! " he called out in a voice—not his own—I hear it now—and I stooped for the rope—I felt I must—I felt sure he could swim, and he would come back whether or not, and I dreaded him. That was in my mind—he would come back. But he was gone down again, and I had the rope in my hand—no, there he was again—his face above the water—and he cried again—and I held my hand, and my heart said " Die ! "—and he sank ; and I felt " It is done—I am wicked, I am lost ! "—and I had the rope in my hand—I don't know what I thought—I was leaping away from myself—I would have saved him then. I was leaping from my crime, and there it was—close to me as I fell—there was the dead face—dead, dead. It can never be altered. That was what happened. That was what I did. You know it all.'

We may think all this something of a misfire (' I was leaping from my crime ') ; but if so, it is one only possible in a writer of great talent. The diction, in any case, is of the simplest—that is, it is truly feminine ; and the contrast holds through much of George Eliot's writing. Her descriptive style, at any rate up to the date of *Romola*, is signally pure. The things

seen and heard are drawn from the memories of her youth in the country, and from her untrammelled sense of beauty. *The Mill on the Floss* is full of such writing, as every one knows; and the cadence, correspondingly, is simple and happy, and scans well:

> Snow lay on the croft and river-bed in undulations softer than the limbs of infancy; it lay with the neatliest finished border on every sloping roof, making the dark-red gables stand out with a new depth of colour; it weighed heavily on the laurels and fir-trees till it fell from them with a shuddering sound; it clothed the rough turnip-field with whiteness, and made the sheep look like dark blotches; the gates were all blocked up with the sloping drifts, and here and there a disregarded four-footed beast stood as if petrified 'in unrecumbent sadness'; there was no gleam, no shadow, for the heavens too were one still, pale cloud—no sound or motion in anything but the dark river, that flowed and moaned like an unresting sorrow.

This limpid English does not disappear in the later stories, though it tends to be thrust out. The picture of the country house where Deronda is brought up, and the rare glimpses of Middlemarch scenery 'under the quiet light of a sky marbled with high clouds,' have the same kind of excellence. And if the chorus tends to become heavier, the dialogue is always liable to remain good. Mr. Raffles and the Garth family talk as naturally as Trollope's people. And whatever may be said against George Eliot, there is a strong mind at the back of all that she may write. Frequently her strength gets in her way, and therefore in ours. It may not make for lightness. But it is equal even to denying itself, and it is wonderful, when her humour comes uppermost, how sterling it can be, and how easy its language. We might perhaps wish that her bad men ended oftener like Goldsmith's Squire Thornhill:

> he now resides in quality of a companion at a relation's house, being very well liked and seldom sitting at the side-table, except when there is no room at the other; for they make no stranger of him.

Tito and Grandcourt do not get off so easily as that, or in such good English. But in a wind-up of high comedy George Eliot recovers all her ground. This is seen in a skilful closing scene of *Middlemarch*, where it is announced that the widow Dorothea, sacrificing her legacy, is to marry Ladislaw. The friends and relations talk the disaster over, are annoyed, apologetic, or lenient; the whole passage, in characterisation and

style, is masterly. The sharpest-tongued member of the party is the kindest.

'It must be admitted that his blood is a frightful mixture!' said Mrs. Cadwallader. 'The Casaubon cuttle-fish fluid to begin with, and then a rebellious Polish fiddler or dancing-master, was it?—and then an old clo——'

'Nonsense, Elinor,' said the rector, rising. 'It is time for us to go.'

'After all, he is a pretty sprig,' said Mrs. Cadwallader, rising too, and wishing to make amends. 'He is like the fine old Crichley portraits before the idiots came in.'

But George Eliot's language also claims to be judged when she is taxing it to the utmost, for solemn or passionate situations. Here, no doubt, it is more uncertain, and its possibilities of weakness have been sufficiently hinted. But she can excel in one specially difficult and risky kind of writing. She has a singular fondness for scenes that may be called confessional; where some slight or limited personage, or as she would say 'nature,' is swept away and spiritualised, if only for a moment, by a stronger and fuller one. This subject recurs again and again. The interview in prison between Dinah Morris and Hetty was suggested by a real event, and here the dialect is evangelical. But it becomes purely human and secular in the appeals made by Felix Holt to Esther Lyon, or by Dorothea to Rosamond Lydgate. It is none the less impressive. We may not much like the speaker; but the dramatic truth and energy, and the mastery of the right words where a word wrong would be disaster, are undeniable. This is but one of the reasons why George Eliot's work, when all is said, stands so firmly. She is considered, and sometimes is, more laborious than inspired; but she herself knew when the mysterious powers were at play; and, says her husband, Mr. Cross,

she told me that in all that she considered her best work there was a 'not herself' that took possession of her, and that she felt her own personality to be merely an instrument through which this spirit, as it were, was acting. Particularly she dwelt on this in regard to the scene in *Middlemarch* between Dorothea and Rosamond, saying that although she knew that they had sooner or later to come together, she kept the idea resolutely out of her mind until Dorothea was in Rosamond's drawing-room. Then, abandoning herself to the inspiration of the moment, she wrote the whole scene exactly as it stands, without alteration or erasure, in an intense state of excitement and agitation, feeling herself entirely possessed by the feeling of the two women.

VIII

Another chronicler of the great middle class, Anthony Trollope [1] (1815-82), published nothing until he was well past thirty; but then he made up way, wrote steadily for a whole generation, and produced, so he tells us, more than Voltaire, and 'more than twice as much as Carlyle.' In his early Irish tales, such as *The Kellys and the O'Kellys*, which are spirited enough and of good omen, the influence of Lever may be detected; but Trollope's flourishing-time opens in 1855 with *The Warden*, the first of the Barsetshire series ('the new shire which I had added to the English counties'). *The Last Chronicle of Barset* appeared in 1867; and between came *Barchester Towers* (1857), *Doctor Thorne* (1858), *Framley Parsonage* (1861), and *The Small House at Allington* (1864). They were accompanied by other stories, not belonging to the series: and of these may be specified *The Bertrams*, *The Three Clerks* (1858), *Orley Farm* (1862), and *The Claverings*; also *Nina Balatka*, an attempt at a somewhat uncongenial kind of romance. In 1869 Trollope started on a new track with the political story *Phineas Finn*; a sequel, *Phineas Redux*, appearing in 1874. During the Seventies he turned out much hack-work (like *Brown, Jones, and Robinson*), but much else as well. *He Knew He Was Right*, *The Vicar of Bullhampton*, *The Eustace Diamonds*, often show his former skill. But Trollope went on penning, he could not stop; *The Prime Minister* and *The American Senator* belong to his later years. His competence was terrible, but he has survived it, and long will do so. In one of his best books, his *Autobiography*, he does himself some injustice by detailing his routine in composition—how he turned out '250 words every quarter of an hour' for so many hours per day. Of course nothing matters but the result; and about its permanent value he is over-modest; for Trollope is read. 'I do not think it probable,' he wrote, 'that my name will remain among those who in the next century will be known as the writers of English prose fiction.'

IX

The Barsetshire tales are woven together, many personages reappearing and growing duly older from book to book. *The Warden* alone has touches of the idyll; the violin of the gentle old hero gives the note of meditative tenderness and quiet satire, which is only broken by the less tuneful pages of

travesty on Carlyle and Dickens ; their names, Mr. Pessimist Anticant and Mr. Sentiment, suggest a reading of Peacock. The comedy and irony of the almshouse scenes, and the studies of senile ingratitude, have lost no freshness, and the canvas is broadened for the scenes of clerical life which are to follow. *Barchester Towers* is more crowded, and richer, and also harsher ; but it contains some very generous passages, like the dialogue of Eleanor Bold with the Signora Neroni, a vivid exotic figure who is introduced (in a manner afterwards made familiar by Henry James) in order to startle the complacency of the well-groomed classes. *Doctor Thorne* is the best-plotted, the most solid in construction, of the whole series, and presents one of Trollope's most admirably drawn girls, Mary Thorne. Story and character here work well together ; for the heroine is tried and her nature is revealed by the stress of the problem, one of contested inheritance, on which the issue turns. *Framley Parsonage* has no such backbone. A parson puts his name to a bill, but his ruin is averted ; a small great lady gets over her dislike that a charming poor gentlewoman should marry her son ; and that is all. The humours and sorrows are mostly in low relief. We are on a walking trip in smiling, insignificant country, which we learn to like. In *The Small House at Allington* there are more country scenes, all truly and sharply presented, with their inhabitants—the old squire, the old earl, and the Dales, mother and daughters, of whom Lily is all men's favourite. But there are also town scenes of acrid high life and vulgar boarding-house, which reveal new resources in Trollope—a true Londoner—and on these he had drawn also in *The Three Clerks*. The town and country groups are connected by the very distinct figure of Johnny Eames, whose heart belies his bodily envelope and his breeding. In *The Last Chronicle* Lily and Eames reappear, but there is no monotony. Nowhere does Trollope show a bolder and surer tragi-comic insight, nowhere does he come nearer to the world of spiritual feeling, than in the character of the Rev. Josiah Crawley ; whose snarling pride and radical integrity, whose confusion of mind approaching madness, whose power of recovery, and of discomfiting the horrible bishopess, together with his piety, passion, and rusty dignity, make him one of the notable clerics of English fiction.

This and other tales of Trollope's turn on what Balzac calls an *affair* of law and money, which is set forth hard-headedly in all its details and with a full analysis of the tremors that it sends flying through sundry otherwise disconnected groups

of persons. By Doctor Thorne's trust, and by Mr. Crawley's supposed theft of a cheque, no person in their small community is left quite indifferent. Scores of neighbours have their quality tested, and come out well, or are shown up badly, as the case may be ; butchers and bakers, the bishop and his circle, the magistrates and attorneys, the Dale ladies, the suitor of Crawley's daughter, and lastly Eames, who happily clears up the enigma. It is all naturally managed ; a difficult feat. Let any one who has been close to any such turmoil sit down, with all the facts at hand, and try to let them tell themselves. In *Orley Farm* the adventure is different ; there is a criminal mystery duly seasoned with humours, and there is also much labour expended upon the tragic emotions. Dickens, Wilkie Collins, and George Eliot all ministered in the early Sixties to the taste for these commodities, and Trollope too set up her stall. He does his work well ; but, forgery being a crime of calculation rather than of impulse, his beautiful lady forger, with her dignity and natural goodness, who commits her crime so suddenly, awakens our doubts. The secret of the plot is soon told us, and the interest turns on its discovery by the world. The legal scenes and persons are triumphs of realism in the proper sense of the term, as distinguished from the transfigured reality of which Dickens is the master. Trollope's Mr. Chaffanbrass, the defender of reprobates, with his soiled wig and 'wicked old eye,' is a now vanished type ; he appears to yet more vicious advantage in *The Three Clerks*. *Orley Farm* is a good sample of Trollope's secondary work ; it also contains a manly, sporting, British boy, Peregrine Orme, of the type that happily always leaves heirs and so cannot die out. The pictures of the raffish clubmen, of the little French woman-sharper, and of the queer gentry who dine at the 'Blue Posts,' show Trollope's familiarity with this portion of Thackeray's world, and also some signs of Thackeray's influence; but Trollope always remains himself, in his British way.

X

Some of his political stories are laid on a stage resembling Disraeli's ; but there is not the same lightness of hand, and the pictures of party coteries are 'obviously,' says Lord Bryce, an excellent judge, 'taken from the outside.' Much of *Phineas Finn*, and some of *Phineas Redux*, is as dull as old party memoirs, or as the reality. Finn is an ordinary young place-hunter, with some rags of conscience. There is more life in

the violent patrician, Lord Chiltern, and in the scenes of high Whig society. Trollope's own mild Whig-Conservative sympathies do not agitate his pen, which drags painfully at times. There are excellent scenes, however, in *Phineas Redux*, notably the trial of the innocent Phineas for murder, where Mr. Chaffanbrass shows to much better advantage than of old; he refuses, on principle, to *know* (until the trial is over) whether a client is guilty or not; but he is taken with Phineas, and gets him off triumphantly. The love-scenes, too, show more complexity of feeling than we expect from Trollope.

He has left some shrewd enough judgements on his brother-novelists. Dickens 'in his best days always lived with his characters'; but 'he invested his puppets with a charm that has enabled him to dispense with human nature.' Lytton, however, 'never knew his own characters.' George Eliot ranks close after Thackeray, but she had an intellect 'very far removed indeed from that which is common in the tellers of stories': a double-edged remark. Trollope's own canons seem to be simple enough. Look first after your characters; plot and pathos come second. Live with your characters. Teach: the novelist 'must teach whether he wishes to teach or no'; but do it pleasantly if you can. Do not bore; do not shock; write nothing that will leave the young lady reader 'less modest than she was before'—so Trollope puts it. You yourself know the seamy side; draw it vividly, even grossly—which is not so hard for you—but stop short, and in reality tell the young lady scarcely anything. Crawl: go nearly at the pace of actual time, which 'ambles withal'; neither slower like Richardson nor quicker like Hugo. Let two or three stories, distinct but interlaced, proceed together, each on its easy course. The whole of a dialogue can be given, and then you are quite lifelike, and the reader will have dined; as Hawthorne said, it is all 'as English as a beef-steak'; but 'no character,' says Trollope sagely, 'should utter much above a dozen words at a breath.' End well; let the moral be taught by the event. But do not foretell the event, unless to make clear what it is *not* to be. Let it appear that Eleanor Bold will at least not marry either of the wrong men. Do not end too soon; develop story and motive with a slow logic. Sometimes do not end at all; people write to you asking that Fames may marry Lily, but leave that conclusion always untold; this is another trick of the trade, but one not to be used too often. It all serves the great end, which is to produce a pleasant illusion of hard fact. Let it be felt that you have

not invented, but reported, an unusually satisfactory bit of dense average experience. Be a little vulgar; so is the experience itself.

To save the illusion, all must be in keeping. Triumphantly, like Jane Austen and unlike other women writers, Trollope forswears anything that might cast too wild a light of tragedy, or too stern a light of irony, on his passages of familiar life. It costs him nothing to keep poetry and ideas at a proper distance. The even surface and ordered passions of society, as he reads it, are seldom broken. He tries sometimes, not very persuasively, to disturb them. In *Rachel Ray* (1863) he depicts a horrible she-fanatic, in the spirit of the time-honoured objection to 'enthusiasm'; but such experiments are rare. He explains, too, that he paints the 'social and not the professional lives of clergymen,' and he is shy of the inner life of devotion. Even his Mr. Crawley 'struggles to teach the people around him *perhaps too much of the mystery, but something also of the comfort*, of religion.' These words were published in 1861, but they have a much older ring. Still Trollope's clergy are celebrated, and an odd question has been raised about them. They are mostly secular to the marrow, and so perhaps were the originals. But he avers that he never knew them much, never haunted cathedral towns at all, but got up the costume and technical points, trusting to his knowledge of human nature at large; investing it, so to speak, with a white tie. The statement need not be doubted; but the task was easier when he left out religion. His contemporary Miss Yonge moves in another world, and in this context mention may be made of the Rev. Francis Paget, whose odd little sketches, *The Warden of Berkingholt* (1843) and *The Owlet of Owlstone Edge* reveal a Trollope-like particularity, much piety, and some pleasantry. The parson's wife, 'whose maiden name was Wire,' and her 'general effect hard, stringy, and tough,' and who 'ate buttered crumpets in a strong-minded way,' is a type. Trollope differs in a piquant way from his mother, Frances Trollope (1780-1860), in his depiction of the clergy. She, in her tale *The Vicar of Wrexhill* (1837), introduces an outrageous Evangelical cleric, a Mr. Cartwright, Tartuffian and Pecksniffian, an inveigler of widows, an oppressor of step-children, a caricature. Mrs. Trollope, years before Dickens described Eden, had raised no little dust by her *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, written in the same ferocious style, but much more convincingly. From her Anthony Trollope, whose tone is cooler, inherited some of his good eyesight.

XI

His patch of Victorian England has not wholly vanished from old hamlets or townlets remote from the railway, in the hunting shires. Dress and means of transit change, but the mental costume of Doctor Thorne or Bishop Proudie changes little. The English girl, the English lady, remain in forms that Trollope would recognise. His countryside cannot alter much. The topography of Barsetshire remains distinct in the map of fancy. Trollope scoured England for years in the capacity of a postal organiser (he is said to have invented pillar-boxes), and he had a strong 'bump of locality.' As a child he dreamed out an imaginary land; and he describes it in his books, with the angles of the village street, the mileage, and the position of the coverts, so that we feel as if we had spent a summer in the place; and he does it all without being dull.

> I had it all in my mind,—its roads and railroads, its towns and parishes and members of parliament, and the different hunts which rode over it. I knew all the great lords and their castles, the squires and their parks, the rectors and their churches.

In the same way he describes persons, giving their physical *dossier*, without a streak of Carlylean insight, and without the mythological air of Dickens, but with every gesture and 'flame of the eye' noted down. So with their mental 'interiors'; all the motives are recited, gazetted, and most logically deduced, without a hint of the unspoken, and with little passion but abundant indulgence and infectious interest. Yet there is more finesse in Trollope than his plain positive style might seem to accommodate; and it is surest in his pictures of women, the nicety of which surprised those who met him in society.

He did not do them better, but he did them more intimately and delicately, than he did his squires, raffs, touts, politicians, and Honourable Johns. Some few of his women belong to the theatre of humours. His Mrs. Proudie is something of an intruder, though a welcome one, into real life, and her touches of humanity, and the author's rueful assertion of her virtues, seem to be thrown in because he feels the intrusion. Still she 'gets over the footlights' every time she speaks. Over a certain range, Trollope's perception of the odious and the delightful in woman is undeniable. It would be idle to refer to what more daring and creative writers delineate in them, while he does not; but how many of these writers would have

known exactly what Grace Crawley said to Lily Dale of what 'mamma has to go through at home,' while papa lay under a suspicion of theft? Trollope's girls, of whom Lucy Robartes was his favourite, talk the purest feminine English, which is a thing apart; he commands it better than many an admired female novelist. How could a man and two women—the father, the mother, and the speaker—be more limpidly exhibited than here?

'How can mamma look after holly-leaves in her present state? And yet she will miss them, too. Poor mamma sees very little that is pretty; but she has not forgotten how pleasant pretty things are.'

'I wish I knew your mother, Grace.'

'I think it would be impossible for any one to know mamma now—for any one who had not known her before. She never makes even a new acquaintance. She seems to think that there is nothing left for her in the world but to try and keep papa out of misery. And she does not succeed in that. Poor papa!'

'Is he very unhappy about this wicked accusation?'

'Yes; he is very unhappy. But, Lily, I don't know about it 's being very wicked.'

'But you know that it is untrue.'

'Of course I know that papa did not mean to take anything that was not his own. But, you see, nobody knows where it came from; and nobody except mamma and Jane and I understand how very absent papa can be. I 'm sure he doesn't know the least in the world how he came by it himself, or he would tell mamma.' . .

The talk of Mrs. Askerton and Miss Amedroz in *The Belton Estate*, a typical Trollope novel, full of what was then called (and justly) 'honest love-making,' has the same simplicity. It is not so easy to attain. 'I like a book,' says another of these heroines, 'to be as clear as running water, so that the whole meaning may be clear at once.' Such is Trollope's aim, and such his gift; and he is also a master of slow, plainly evolving pathos, the simpler the better. There are many signs of his revival now, when more rhetorical and ambitious talents are forgotten. Editions multiply, and critics praise him—not without wonder that the readers have been beforehand with them—in spite of his prolixity and fecundity. His first readers liked longer meals, carouses, sermons, and stories than we do. Trollope seems to be telling a story to an audience of his own clayey country gentlemen. But then the life he records is itself a slow, ruminative life. His tales are a rest-cure after over-sexed fiction and priggish satire; and his fidelity, his patience, his tolerant grasp of ordinary motive are rewarded.

CHAPTER XXIV

OTHER NOVELISTS

I

During the years 1846 to 1856, while Dickens and Thackeray were in full flood, appeared the works of the three Brontë[1] sisters, Charlotte (1816-55), Emily (1818-48), and Anne (1820-49). With them, with Mrs. Gaskell, with Miss Yonge, and with Mrs. Oliphant the day of the women novelists begins anew. None of any account had appeared since Miss Ferrier, whose last story, *Destiny*, is dated 1830. Miss Edgeworth lived till 1849, but belongs to the former age. In 1848 Mrs. Gaskell came into note with her *Mary Barton*. George Eliot's *Scenes of Clerical Life* were not in print till 1857. The Brontës dominate the interval, and the two greater of the sisters stand above all contemporary women writers of prose by virtue of their fund of original power and passion, and also of their good English. Indeed, they provide something that the male masters of fiction do not. *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre* are in the nature of a great breaking-out: they affect us after *Pendennis* or *Dombey*, somewhat as *King Arthur's Tomb* or *The Defence of Guenevere* affect us after Tennyson's 'English idylls' or Matthew Arnold's contemplations. Before describing further, it is well to mark the simple chronology of the Brontës' writings.

First, in 1846, came the unnoticed *Poems* 'by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell.' Next year *Jane Eyre*, 'by Currer Bell,' swept away the public and most of the critics; but Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, by 'Ellis Bell,' and Anne's *Agnes Grey*, by 'Acton Bell,' met with much less regard. Many were puzzled as to the sex of the writers, or confused their identities. In 1848 Anne produced *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. Charlotte followed in 1849 with *Shirley*, and in 1853 with *Villette*; she died in 1855, having married the Rev. Arthur Bell Nicholls the year before. *The Professor*, originally entitled *The Master*, was printed in 1857; it was the first tale which Charlotte Brontë had submitted to publishers; it had meanwhile been recast

and elaborated in *Villette*. In the same year appeared Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, in which the whole family is delineated, and which increased the established name and fame of Charlotte. Emily's greatness was little seen for a whole generation, but no one ignores it now. Anne, half-eclipsed and half kept in remembrance by her sisters, had no genius, but some true talent for the observation of painful things.

To the seven stories written by the three sisters the world has agreed to add an eighth, namely, the story of their lives, which is the most remarkable of all. Fuller knowledge, the publication of Charlotte Brontë's many letters, and much matter collected by devotees, has served to correct and supplement Mrs. Gaskell's account. In some particulars Mrs. Gaskell, honestly but unwarrantably, romanced, and was compelled to retract or revise. She testifies and preaches overmuch ; she probably overdarkens the shadow on the Brontë family ; she does not know how conventional she is capable of being ; she talks in most mistaken tones about the 'coarseness' of certain passages ; her refined sympathy and delicate affection stop short of perceiving, or at least of approving, the 'dæmonic' element in the genius of Emily and Charlotte ; and she says that Emily did not quite make 'a pleasant impression.' Still, her book is a biographical classic, if not one of the first order. As a result, an eager inquisitive searchlight has raked the lives of three of the shyest and proudest women in England. In all that is disclosed there is 'nothing but well and fair' ; yet the reader cannot but feel, even now, something of an eavesdropper. But the lot of departed genius is never easy ; and there must be those among the dead who would rather have had their virtues forgotten than advertised.

There is no dead flat realism in Charlotte Brontë's handiwork ; her faults, which lie in the direction of over-emphasis and exaltation, are those of force and flame, not of dulness or weakness. Still, more than most writers of her calibre, she worked on a basis of actual reminiscence ; and in this, even when it is freely handled, there remains a tone of wrath, or pain, or admiration, or restless independence, which is personal and not invented. The Brontës, after sundry schoolings and migrations, settled with their widowed father and their luckless brother Branwell at the now famed parsonage of Haworth. Except for the signal experience at Brussels, which is reflected in *Villette* and *The Professor*, Emily and Charlotte hardly went afield at all. The visits of Charlotte to London, Manchester, and elsewhere, paid after she had become well known, leave

certain traces in *Villette*. After her manner, she draws the typical Englishman, the Dr. John Britten of the story, from a living model, George Smith the publisher. Many other persons and places in her books have been identified; but fact and fiction are always blended.

II

In *The Professor*, which is a most interesting sketch of the Belgian scenes afterwards recast and elaborated in *Villette*, are already to be found the Catholic school with its stifling air, the Jesuitical directress with her bad passions, the rows of noisy cow-like Flemish damsels, the inevitable modest oppressed young lady (here but half-English), and her hectoring blue-pencilling professor. Here too, already, Charlotte Brontë makes it her mission to show up the sham-romantic conception of the *jeune fille*; and the ruthless schoolmaster is an excellent mouthpiece for her purpose. Here too, as in all her later books except *Shirley*, the heroine is, to say the least, not obviously beautiful: another new departure in fiction. Otherwise the two stories diverge. Not the prototype of Lucy Snowe, but the professor himself, the Yorkshireman Crimsworth, is the narrator, and describes his own love-affair. Indeed Charlotte Brontë, greatly daring, shows distinct skill not only in that description, but also in the self-portraiture of the same Crimsworth at an earlier stage, when he is led by vanity and the senses to incline to the addresses of the lady directress. No doubt the authoress has a weakness for a pedagogue, and also for some other varieties of bully. This is partly due to a revulsion against the correct leading gentlemen of the domestic novel. The scene in which Crimsworth, after presenting the cynical Hunsden to his betrothed, goes out into the street, and wrestles and rolls with him on the pavement in savage friendliness, is a remarkable one for a woman to have thought of. These snapping North-countrymen give us a foretaste of *Shirley*; and there is nothing, on the masculine side, so natural in *Villette*. All this shows more than the promise of power, and so do the page of moonlit landscape and the quiet interior of the English girl's lodging.

Charlotte Brontë never wrote anything more direct and clear, and less overloaded, than this brief story, and she truly said:

> All that relates to Brussels, the Belgian school, etc., is as good as I can write; it contains more pith, more substance, more reality, in my judgement, than much of *Jane Eyre*.

She was the sworn admirer of Thackeray, and we cannot affirm that she was influenced by Dickens. Still the early pages of *Jane Eyre* (1847) recall those of *Oliver Twist* (1837-8) and the school scenes in *Nickleby* (1838-9). Yet they are plain, direct, real, untouched by farce, and written in what Thackeray well called her 'artist's noble English,' and therefore come nearer to the passages with Mr. Bumble, or even to the best parts of *Copperfield*, than they do to the great *Squeeriad*. And they are, we know, in great part reminiscence, not so much 'drawn from the life' as torn out of it. The pillorying of Jane Eyre at Lowood, and her earlier interview with Mrs. Reed, are examples of that *absolute* in presentment to which Charlotte Brontë did not often attain :

'My uncle Reed is in heaven, and can see all you do and think ; and so can papa and mamma ; they know how you shut me up all day long, and how you wish me dead.' . . .

'I am glad you are no relation of mine : I will never call you aunt again as long as I live. I will never come to see you when I am grown up ; and if any one asks me how I liked you, and how you treated me, I will say the very thought of you makes me sick, and that you treated me with miserable cruelty.'

This is final, but there is not much else like it in *Jane Eyre*. A book with a great ambition, and with a great spirit behind it, and with a new ring in it, and with some wonderful passages, *Jane Eyre* is something short of a great book. One critic has said that there is something puerile in Charlotte Brontë's imagination ; let us call it rather, to coin a word, 'puelline.' It matters little that the carpentry is of an elementary kind. Certainly Miss Braddon or Mrs. Henry Wood would have thought long before using the device of the distant uncle, the sudden fortune left to Jane, and the family of unknown cousins whom she discovers whilst wandering in the night. They would also have tried to explain how the existence and identity of the lunatic Mrs. Rochester were perfectly concealed from county society. But this is only machinery, serving two ends. The first and the lesser aim is to strike terror, and it is achieved. Hardly in Scott, sometimes in Maturin, once in Lytton (*The Haunted and the Haunters*) is there anything like the 'curious laugh, distinct, formal, mirthless,' which 'passed off in a peal that seemed to wake an echo in every lonely chamber,' and which, breaking in on the dull cheerful scene, is the first omen of Jane's tragic experience. The midnight visit of the mad wife,[1] and her rending of Jane's bridal veil, mark the summit

of Charlotte Brontë's power in this direction. Yet these, again, are but accessories. The second and central aim is to lead up Jane and Rochester to the altar; but love, after a great struggle, is first sacrificed to duty. Tennyson's poem on that conflict had been published five years before. Great power is spent by Miss Brontë in representing Jane's battle with her lover and herself; the 'novel of passion' could never again be the same after 1847. No English writer had ever yet proclaimed the right of the woman to declare her feeling, to assert equality, and then, under a call yet stronger, to resist. Yet the effect is incomplete, not to say lopsided; for who can care about Rochester, or believe in him? He is none the more genuine for being very distinct; he is a woman's excogitated man, much exposed to the parodist. Jane, indeed, is wholly alive; her love, her despair, and her decision are painted unerringly. The worst that can be said is that her talk is inevitably touched with the unreality of Rochester himself; that her banter is full of false notes, and that her avowals smack of rhetoric. But who does not know that true passion is often rhetorical and speaks in poor taste?

At yet another point Charlotte Brontë triumphs. It was all-important that Jane Eyre should be not indeed ill-looking, but in the world's eye plain; and that still she should be able not only to charm, and to inspire a great and lawless passion, but to feel a great though lawful one; nay, more, that she should be able to declare it, without the touch of absurdity supposed to lurk in a plain woman's declaration. Herein Charlotte Brontë doubtless wished to upset a cheap literary convention; but, more than that, she perhaps wished to freshen and deepen the conception of physical beauty itself. Jane becomes beautiful to the eye—or to the right eyes—when her spirit stands up and shines out; 'for soul is form, and doth the body make.' On the other hand, in the male whom Jane Eyre is destined to attract, classical good looks would be a clear drawback. He must be, and look, strong; and he must not be, or seem, too virtuous. Mr. Rochester proposes, not bigamy, but what George Borrow's gypsies called 'something in the roving and uncertificated line.' Jane, or the cautious puritan in her composition, declines; she prefers virtue and self-respect even to Rochester, though after a long-drawn struggle, which is fervidly and also convincingly described, Rochester remains, on the whole, rather grotesque. As a foil to him is introduced Jane's fanatical missionary cousin with regular features, who nearly carries her off to India.

The Reverend John—to speak in fantasy—is a white king, Rochester a black king—both equally wooden pieces moved about the chessboard. Yet the whole of *Jane Eyre*, good and bad parts alike, is written with a rapid concentration, and with a force and freshness of soul, that are hardly found in its successors. *Shirley* is something of a miscellany; and in *Villette* there is more trace of the laborious process of verbal tesselation mentioned by Mrs. Gaskell:

> She would wait patiently, searching for the right term, until it presented itself to her. It might be provincial, it might be derived from the Latin [*sic*]; so that it accurately represented her idea, she did not mind whence it came; but this care makes her style present the finish of a piece of mosaic.

III

Lucy Snowe, who tells the story in *Villette*, is another sufferer: a pupil and teacher in the *pensionnat*, an English Protestant stranger in the land. Her vexations are more various than Jane's. They include doubt and jealousy, humiliation and supernatural fears, loneliness and espionage. The ghostly nun may be only a masquerading gallant; but Lucy's terrors, seen in retrospect, are only the worse for having been explained away in Radcliffian fashion. Lucy is outwardly even colder than Jane; the name of Snowe is a symbol; and her language sometimes has the same streak of unreality. But the unmistakeable central flame is there. In some incidents, such as Lucy's light-headed visit to the confessional, Charlotte Brontë drew on her own experience in Brussels. Much has also been written about the connexion of that experience with the love-story in *Villette*. Some of her letters to her 'master,' M. Constantin Heger,[1] were published a few years ago by her family, and the manuscript of them was given to the British Museum. The letters breathe the far-off devotion of a pupil; a hectic desire, which does not lessen our respect, for encouragement and recognition; an immense solitariness of spirit; and nothing more. M. Heger, a mature gentleman with certain superficial likenesses to Paul Emanuel, does not seem to have taken much notice. Genius made use of this baffled enthusiasm, and built upon it the very different romance of Miss Snowe. Such examples of the conversion of energy are not uncommon. Paul Emanuel himself, unlike Rochester, is a real man—so real that we can hardly tolerate him; but he is alive, and electric; and in the eyes of Lucy

Snowe, who sees all his faults, he is, or becomes, adorable. The ending of the book is hard to parallel, for it is left verbally uncertain whether M. Paul has been drowned or not. Mrs. Gaskell says that this ambiguity was a concession to the feelings of the Rev. Patrick Brontë, who could not bear that he should perish ; but

> the idea of M. Paul Emanuel's death at sea was stamped on her imagination, till it assumed the distinct force of reality ; and she could no more alter her fictitious ending than if they had been facts which she was relating. All she could do in compliance with her father's wish was so to veil the fate in oracular words as to leave it to the character and discernment of her readers to interpret her meaning.

The lyrical pages which relate the suspense of Lucy Snowe and lead up to the 'oracular words' are the most loftily sustained in all Charlotte Brontë's prose ; and a happy ending, though not incompatible with their literal meaning, would have been flat indeed. Lucy's inner life is thus all aspiration, hope, and pain, and is full of the pain of transferred love. This is always the hardest kind of love to describe ; but Charlotte Brontë describes it with signal delicacy, and Lucy keeps her dignity. In contrast with this tenderness of handling, the outer world of Villette is portrayed with biting—not to say scratching—satire. The orderly cheery surface of the school, covering its real vulgarity and corruption, is a new scene in fiction. Originals have been traced for the stealthy Madame Beck, and for the handsome, selfish, and lumpish Ginevra Fanshawe ; also for the Brettons and their group, who move on the fringe of the story and somewhat distract the interest ; but the cameo beauty Paulina is a distinct and charming creature. *Villette*, though not rising to the pitch of *Jane Eyre*, and betraying more labour, is more diversified in power, and contains more of Charlotte Brontë herself, than any of her other books.

Shirley is the portrait of a soul, and a picture of manners and character, but it has no particular plan. There is no marked crisis in it, either outward or spiritual ; only a couple of love-stories, long drawn out and lumbering to a close that becomes obvious in advance. The episodes of machine-breaking and shooting are brilliantly told, but are soon over. They are, in substance, taken from the life ; Charlotte Brontë's country-side was full of memories of the Luddite riots. The originals of many *dramatis personæ* have been traced. In Caroline

Helstone there are features of Charlotte's bosom friend, Ellen Nussey; the Yorke sisters and Mr. Helstone are likewise in part transcriptions. The well-known three curates were in a position to peruse their own portraits; and the rough comedy of the drawing was continued without a break, and even improved, in real life. Nothing in *Shirley* itself equals the scene of 'Mr. Donne,' the thick-skinned and arrogant, 'meekly' taking tea with Charlotte Brontë after the publication of the book; and it was thought, we hear, that 'the satire of Shirley had improved his disposition.' The brutal manners of the place and time appear to be reflected with little exaggeration, and are specially conspicuous in the so-called gentle class. It is a world of 'characters,' of eccentrics; the rector, the manufacturer, the servants, the inevitable pedagogue—every one is alive, and every one is more or less disagreeable, and is meant to be so; except, indeed, the two girls who fill the centre of the stage, and on whom the finer skill and sympathy of the writer are expended. They are her refuge from the society which she describes with a bluntness not far short of its own.

Shirley Keeldar embodies traits of Emily Brontë. Unlike Emily, she is a frank, expansive, sociable, and beautiful woman. But in physical and mental courage they are alike. Shirley's cautery of her dog-bite is an actual reminiscence, and her temper and spirit often recall *The Old Stoic* and *Honour's Martyr*. The character also suggests an effort to escape from the mouse-like type of heroine. Mlle. Henri, Jane Eyre, and Lucy Snowe are no doubt lion-hearted mice, but they are difficult of acquaintance. After all, we cannot always be vindicating the *femme incomprise*, and gaiety and beauty are gifts of the gods. Shirley Keeldar, besides drawing together the threads of the incomposite story, brings some sunshine into the desperate moorland. Yet Charlotte Brontë, even here, does not forsake her favourites. The retiring Caroline Helstone, so affectionately and nicely presented, is no mere foil to the heroine, but holds her own, and speaks her mind, and comes into her happiness. There is more feeling for charm in this tale than in its predecessors, and there is no saying what more concessions Charlotte Brontë might have made had she lived longer.

For, as she well knows, she has little charm to offer. It is hardly in the bond. Yorkshire and Brussels provided acrid subjects, only to be handled by a strong mind which was infected indeed with their own quality, but which also rose up against them, craving for escape and self-expression. The

author knows that she is hard ; but we are not to know whether the steel of her nature ever glowed with the passion of love as she represents it. She observes once that ' there is something which every now and then tells me dreary secrets about my race ' ; and she repeats those secrets. Perhaps genius, to do its work, must be repelled as well as attracted by its subject ; must punish itself for its subject. In one case out of ten it may achieve a happy lyric or unclouded idyll. Charlotte Brontë is thus the protesting and indignant and suffering spirit of her own grim scene. Little room is left for charm. Instead, there is strength ; strength that is only half-trained, owing to its almost complete, and bitterly deplored, exclusion from the big careless world ; strength of the feminine, unbreakable kind, driven in upon itself.

IV

For the bleakness of her topics Charlotte Brontë finds compensation, sometimes in nature and sometimes in the country of dreams. Nor is her landscape all forbidding. Some lines in a letter to Sydney Dobell not only give the cadence and colour of her prose, but also suggest an apt symbol for the spirit of the sisters :

I know nothing of such an orchard-country as you describe. I have never seen such a region. Our hills only confess the coming of summer by growing green with young fern and moss, in secret little hollows. Their bloom is reserved for autumn ; then they burn with a kind of dark glow, different, doubtless, from the blush of garden blossoms.

Of this kind of writing there is most in *Shirley* ; Ruskin had only been a few years in the field, and though Charlotte Brontë admired him there is no definite sign of his influence. Her picturing is original in stamp and style ; the imagery pure and distinct, the words chosen, yet simple and not out of the way ; the aim is a kind of quiet splendour, and it is reached. There is a delight in open and sonorous vowels, the clauses are short, and there are no complex harmonies ; but the ear is more than satisfied :

It was a still night—calm, dewy, cloudless : the gables, turned to the west, reflected the clear amber of the horizon they faced ; the oaks behind were black ; the cedar was blacker ; under its dense, raven boughs a glimpse of sky opened gravely blue : it was full of the moon, which looked solemnly and mildly down on Caroline from beneath that sombre canopy.

The same qualities of form are found in all Charlotte Brontë's exalted passages. In the description of Rachel, as Vashti, in *Villette*, striking as it is, the touch of turgescence in the language can hardly be denied. But there are the fevered night-scenes through which Lucy Snowe goes wandering; and also the visions and high-wrought compositions attributed to Shirley Keeldar, who pours out these treasures in the course of conversation without ruffling a curl. These pages are a frank and direct bid for sheer magnificence, and the magnificence is never far away. Some have thought that Charlotte Brontë was not wholly unaffected, in this aspiration, by her reading of Hugo; and with her Brussels master she did read Hugo; but I should assign more influence to her general study of French, to her practice in writing it, and also to the professorial discipline that she underwent in the business of set composition. She learned to be concise and luminous, and yet not to be ashamed of oratory. The specimen exercise corrected by M. Heger and quoted by Mrs. Gaskell may be compared with the English *poème* on *La première femme savante* which Shirley wrote for the eye of Louis Moore. To the end there remains a touch of the prize essay in Charlotte Brontë's eloquence; but I doubt if any English authoress has equalled it. Her most nearly perfect prose is inspired by the affections. It is heard in her letter on Emily's death, and in another well-known passage:

> My sister Emily loved the moors. Flowers brighter than the rose bloomed in the blackest of the heath for her; out of a sullen hollow in a livid hillside her mind could make an Eden. She found in the bleak solitude many and dear delights; and not the least and best beloved was—liberty.

V

Emily Brontë herself rarely writes at this pitch. She is less troubled by literature and the search for style, and is not so careful to satirise society in set form. Her imagination dwells undisturbed amongst beings untutored and passionate. She died at thirty, and seems mostly to have practised the gospel of silence and contempt, living in nature, the imagination, and the pieties of home. But her few extant letters and notes leave a more cheerful impression[1] than the accounts of Charlotte, from whom most of our information is drawn.

> I am quite contented for myself . . . seldom or never troubled, with nothing to do, and merely desiring that everybody could be as comfortable as myself and as undesponding, and then we should have a very tolerable world of it. (1845.)

Charlotte relates that Emily watched and well knew the people of the countryside, but that she was content to play the listener; the passage is noteworthy:

> She could hear of them with interest, and talk of them with detail, minute, graphic, and accurate; but *with* them she rarely exchanged a word. Hence it ensued, that what her mind had gathered of the real concerning them was too exclusively confined to those tragic and terrible traits, of which, in listening to the secret annals of every rude vicinage, the memory is sometimes compelled to receive the impress. Her imagination, which was a spirit more sombre than sunny —more powerful than sportive—found in such traits material whence it wrought creations like Heathcliff, like Earnshaw, like Catherine.

Whether Charlotte, with all her love and admiration, fully saw the excellence of *Wuthering Heights*, is a question; twice she calls it 'strange'; but she touches truly enough, though gently, on that element in the book which is brain-spun, rather than invented in accord with real life. The domineering Heathcliff is a descendant of the lays of Byron and the romances of the terror-mongers; he is an old friend, the Satanic leading gentleman, transplanted to the moorland, and invested with many real, and many unreal, traits by a woman of genius. 'Your bliss,' observes the elder Catherine, 'lies like his'—Satan's, namely—'in inflicting misery.' And so the younger Catherine:

> 'Mr. Heathcliff, *you* have *nobody* to love you; and, however miserable you make us, we shall still have the revenge of thinking that your cruelty rises from your greater misery. You *are* miserable, are you not? Lonely, like the devil, and envious like him? *Nobody* loves you—*nobody* will cry for you when you die! I wouldn't be you!'
>
> 'You shall be sorry to be yourself presently,' said her father-in-law, 'if you stand there another minute. Begone, witch, and get your things.' She scornfully withdrew.

Heathcliff, like Rochester, is a woman's dream of an elemental man; but, despite his literary origins, he is a hundred times as much alive. As Charlotte Brontë wrote, 'the worst of it is, some of his spirit . . . haunts every moor and glen, and beckons in every fir-tree of the Heights.' In his relationship with Catherine Earnshaw—afterwards Catherine Linton—*his* Catherine—he is genuine, and herein lies the essence of the book. But the honours rest with Catherine herself; the words in which she proclaims, and the deeds by which she ratifies, her changeless identity of soul with Heathcliff, must be unique in fiction, and it would be hard to find the like in poetry. Each

of them, when they finally avow their love and rush into a frustrate embrace, is married to a despised mate. Thus far, passion overrides the law ; and the rights and affinities of the individual are asserted in too stern a fashion to be badged as 'romantic.' But it is characteristic of Emily Brontë that she does not waste a moment on the idea of a union outside the law, such as Rochester proposes to Jane Eyre ; such a solution is never even named ; and the lovers are never united. In life they are parted for good ; Heathcliff, by manœuvring with the graves, sees to it that they shall meet in death. The tragic effect would have been spoilt by any other solution ; there is nothing puritanical in the treatment ; yet there can be no question, in such an atmosphere, of any ordinary scruples.

As a story, *Wuthering Heights* is superficially awkward and inexperienced work, with its Chinese-box narratives, its intricate intermarriages, and its vagueness as to the imaginary dates. The crudest incident is the half-compulsory wedlock of the whining Linton Heathcliff with the younger Catherine Linton ; how that affair was contrived, under the supposed conditions, remains inscrutable. But soon the reader becomes reconciled to the plan. Ellen Dean tells her tale most naturally (allowing for certain conventions which permit her to overhear all things), and she supplies most of the humanity and sense that can be discovered in the *Wuthering Heights* world. Her listener, the Mr. Lockwood who has blundered into the last act of the tragedy, is an ideally stupid foil to the actors themselves. His opening visit to the terrible Heathcliff household, where he is worried by the dogs, at once gives the keynote of the book. There is, no doubt, little gradation in the characters ; they are either very hard or very limp ; and few stories represent more sharply what Hobbes called the state of war, and later theorists the struggle for existence. At the very end there is a ray of light, when that strangest of Iphigenias, the younger Catherine, finds herself free to civilise, and prepares to make happy, Hareton Earnshaw, that most unpromising of Cymons. Otherwise, there is everywhere the 'atmospheric tumult' of 'stormy weather' which we are told is signified by the word 'wuthering.'

The Brontës had brought themselves up on the best authors, and had the instinct for pure and accurate prose. They wrote from childhood onwards ; more than thirty of Charlotte's youthful works are on record. All three sisters have the virtue of extreme distinctness, and in Emily's case the effect is mostly natural and unstudied. Either by nature, or in order that the sex of Ellis Bell may be disguised, Emily's style is what is

called masculine. The roughness and rudeness of the dialogue in *Shirley* is tenfold intensified in *Wuthering Heights*, and doubtless reflects what the authoress heard out-of-doors. She is careless, while the great popular novelists were most careful, about verbally shocking the middle-class public. But the public were little shocked, because they did not read the book; at the best, pronouncing *Wuthering Heights* 'wild,' or 'strangely original.' But it now juts out amid the fiction of the time like an outcrop of black volcanic scaur in a land of parks or orchards or in a suburb. One achievement of the Brontës was to reveal the North country; for the waste portion of the belts lying between the Border and the fatter Midlands had been little explored by the novelists.

Charlotte's gift, though not her feeling, usually deserts her in verse; Anne wrote many pious and pleasant lines, some of which are lodged in the hymn-books; and the sense of Emily for poetic speech and metre was less sure and less trained than her sense for prose. She, too, wrote a good deal of rhyme which is without much character, and she was often entangled in cheap fashionable tunes. The pieces that have been recovered and printed in recent years do not add much to her garland. Yet, as if by accident, she wrote a little very great poetry—poetry with the strain of grandeur, poetry that is an immortal expression of insuperable courage. *Remembrance*, *The Old Stoic*, 'No coward soul is mine,' and a very few other pieces, are of this rank. Her passion for liberty is not more conspicuous than her tenderness, her pride, and her strength of head. In the rough lines called *Honour's Martyr* there is a Browningesque energy of conception. The speaker, for honour's sake, is ready to die, while incurring a false accusation of treachery in the eyes of the world and also of his liege lady:

> Oh, I would give my heart to death,
> To keep my honour fair;
> Yet, I 'll not give my inward faith
> My honour's *name* to spare . . .
>
> So foes pursue, and cold allies
> Mistrust me, every one:
> Let me be false in others' eyes,
> If faithful in my own.

But in another piece, an elegy, she exclaims:

> Well, let them fight for honour's breath,
> Or pleasure's shade pursue—
> The dweller in the land of death
> Is changed and careless too.

Emily Brontë's measures are seldom invented, but now and then she hits on one of her own that is magically right for its purpose : ' Cold in the earth—and the deep snow piled above thee.' She died so young that we cannot say what she might not have done, both in poetry and in fiction.

VI

The two stories of Anne Brontë move on conventional lines but have a quality of their own. They are not soft, and it is misleading to call Anne the ' gentlest ' of the sisters ; gentle is a relative term. The orgy in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, where the drunken gentlemen brawl and draw blood in presence of the ladies, was not written by a domestic novelist. It is none the less effective for the obvious reluctance of the author to pen it. Anthony Trollope might have shrunk from composing, or at least from printing it. As in *Jane Eyre*, the ostensible subject is the outcry of the heart against the bonds of the law. The wife of the callow and unfaithful drunkard has a good man waiting for her ; but there is no show, as there is in Jane's case, of a moral struggle ; the lady is severely sure of herself ; and the good man must wait until the bad man comes, as he duly does come, to a bad end. This, however, is not the real matter of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* ; the real matter is drink ; and through the diffuse and heavy narrative of the wife (embedded in journal form in the main story) can be traced the faithful, the unsparing, the burnt-in recollections of the sister of Branwell Brontë. Charlotte, who thought the ' choice of subject ' a ' mistake,' and foreign to Anne's character, tells us that she wrote the tale ' under a strange, conscientious, half-ascetic notion of accomplishing a painful penance and a severe duty.' Whatever the motive, the result is not trifling. The minor figures, mostly repellent, are designed with the family instinct for satire, which no doubt in Anne's case is subdued and slighter. It is the same in *Agnes Grey*, which draws in faint but faithful lines the discomforts of a governess among callous people. But it would have taken a bold man, and a bolder woman, to associate with the three Brontës and live under their three converging microscopes.

There is little of the rebel in Anne, but how Protestant these Brontë novels are ! The ' freedom of the natural soul,' the freedom of the moors, the freedom to choose and dare and judge, and the freedom, too, to suffer in one's own way and not in the expected way—it is all much more Protestant than it is

antinomian or ' romantic.' The Belgian tribulations of Emily and Charlotte merely intensified their inborn resolve to possess their own minds ; the tortuous Roman discipline and bad atmosphere made them, no doubt, more Protestant than ever ; though their minds were too strong to be sectarian, and Emily, at any rate, seems to have sailed her lonely bark out into the open. Shirley, and Jane, and Lucy, and the Catherines all flash out on behalf of their freedom : in *Wuthering Heights* this impulse becomes aboriginal and fierce, and it remains a clean flame. The two sisters did more to assert the spiritual rights and equalities of their sex than all the pamphleteers from Mary Wollstonecraft to John Stuart Mill, and than all the novels of George Sand. A society composed of persons like ' elle et lui ' would be animated and interesting, but would not last long ; a society with more Janes and Shirleys would be all the stronger, with better feminine brains presiding over more passionate natures. The two sisters were the first English-women to exhibit this truth by creative methods ; and that, perhaps, is their significance in the historical aspect. They have left the soundest and most imaginative statement of claim from the feminine standpoint. Hence, too, the casual and passing howl against the morality of *Jane Eyre*, a book which now seems to err on the didactic side.

VII

Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell[1] (1810-65), besides having more artistic feeling and power of concentration, was more happily placed than the women of talent like Miss Yonge and Mrs. Oliphant who could not stop writing. It is easy to read all that Mrs. Gaskell wrote : six novels, some forty shorter tales or sketches, and *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. Her husband was a Unitarian minister in Manchester ; her chosen scene was the north of England, including the north-east coast. She was the first writer of any real gift who described, as an inhabitant and from within, both the black country and also some of the green country upon its fringe. Mrs. Gaskell is a charitable humourist, never savage, and in that field is a minute worker and sure observer ; seldom daring, not strongly intellectual, and best in the idyllic or domestic style. Her pathos, too, is genuine ; excellent when restrained, but apt to be diffuse and commonplace and to miss the mark ; and there is an undertone of feminine preaching in it. She also frequently aims at dark and tragic effects, at delineating storm and

violence, and she practises in the sinister or the supernatural. Such work she does with mixed success, but the impression, for good or ill, is always markedly distinct, never vague or dim ; and often she makes a real picture, or surprises us with something that seemed beyond her strength. Her diction is pure and transparent ; there is a general soft felicity about it, especially in the conversations, and it gathers force when Mrs. Gaskell uses dialect, a device that she does not overdo. We are not to expect much sudden illumination of phrase, or the edged, imaginative English of the Brontës, or the same mental or emotional horizon as theirs. Mrs. Gaskell's novels may be noticed first ; the short stories which precede them or are scattered between them are a somewhat different form of art, and also explore some unexpected territory, not visible in the longer books. The novels are *Mary Barton* (1848), *Cranford* (1851-3), *Ruth* (1853), *North and South* (1854-5), *Sylvia's Lovers* (1863), and the unfinished *Wives and Daughters* (1864-6).

Despite the interval between them, *Mary Barton* and *North and South* go together and may be judged together. They give, in story-form, the writer's impressions and opinions of the labour crisis in Lancashire, the first book representing the turmoil and riot of the early Forties, the second describing similar scenes with a firmer hand and a deeper vision. *Coningsby* and *Sybil* preceded *Mary Barton*, but it is said that Mrs. Gaskell did not know them ; her work, in any case, is independent, and may be regarded both as a picture of manners and as matter for the historian. *Mary Barton*, like Kingsley's *Yeast*, though it is manifestly, from its rather loose construction and superflux of pathetic writing, a 'first story,' has an unspoilt passionate freshness about it which Mrs. Gaskell never afterwards excelled, and hardly recovered. There is, no doubt, some tinge of melodrama, not only in the incidents but in the feeling. The figure of the 'lost woman' Esther, Mary Barton's aunt, inspires much doubt, and the elder Carson, who pursues his son's murderer with due ferocity but afterwards relents, inspires a good deal more. But these are perhaps concessions to the mode of Dickens, and they do not seriously weaken the general effect. Some of the single scenes and episodes—the fire, the meeting of Mary Barton with her hunted father, and above all Mary's desperate chase after the one witness who can clear her wrongfully accused lover—are worthy of any novelist. Mary herself is an unquestioned triumph, she never ceases to be a girl of the people ; her Lancashire tenacity and simplicity of purpose, her equal and

conflicting affection for father and lover, the one an actual and the other the suspected murderer, not only shine throughout, but in fact decide the course and issue of the story. The lover, Jem Wilson, is also solidly and faithfully drawn. Mrs. Gaskell was taxed by William Rathbone Greg and others with travestying the employers and ignoring their case; and certainly she chooses some stony examples of the tribe. But the employers could take good care of themselves; and moreover she presents very strictly the illusions and madnesses, as well as the wrongs and woes, of the employed; and it was her business to show their side of the case; and, without affecting to be an economist, she wrote of what she knew, as no one had yet written. The scene where the lots are drawn for the business of slaying the younger Carson is not *ex parte* writing at all, and is told with just that economy and concentration of stroke which Mrs. Gaskell did not always command. Had she attained it oftener her rank among story-tellers, honourable as it is, would have been different.

In *North and South* we are still in 'Darkshire,' amid strikes and riots; and the Lancastrian rough diamonds—black uncut diamonds and not beautiful—have plenty of sullen flame in them. It may be feared that Mrs. Gaskell courts more sympathy than she can win for her rugged millowner and for his narrow and brutal mother; the first of whom inflicts his love, and the second her insolence, upon the Southern-born and well-nurtured heroine. And she too, Margaret Hale, though full of grit and virtues, is also a somewhat prickly and hard-spoken young person, as indeed she must be if she is to cope with the surroundings. There is much haranguing and debating on the ethics of the strike and on the relationship between workman and employer; all of which, while of historical interest, is a drag upon the story. Yet *North and South* is a well based and skilfully built narrative, containing many dramatic and admirably coloured scenes. Mrs. Gaskell, like Disraeli, can portray the rage of a crowd; and there is true descriptive strength in the passage where Margaret throws herself forward beside her millowner, Thornton, to face an infernal clog-throwing mob. The passion of the place, of the time, and of the people, is communicated; for Mrs. Gaskell feels it herself, and she also masters it as an artist. Much ingenious care is shown in the detail of the plot. Margaret's parting with her brother, and the lies which she tells to the inspector in order to shield him, and the misconstructions that follow, are excellent sensational comedy, with a grim back-

ground; nor is the happy ending, where all is cleared up, perfunctory.

Cranford is in some ways the kind of book that Addison might have written if he had been a woman, instead of being a man deeply versed in women's smaller matters and faintly contemptuous of them. It is, in fact, not a tale but, like the *Coverley Papers*, a string of episodes in which the same people recur; there is the same stillness of atmosphere, and the same sort of sweetness in the humour. It is the only book written by Mrs. Gaskell chiefly in the key of humour. There is also an allowance of pathos, which here does not prove a snare to the author, and which is above all true and delicate when the old family letters come to be perused. One of the most skilfully drawn of the persons is the teller, Mary Smith, the young amused observer of the scene, who herself grows into its spirit and becomes infected with its *naïveté*. There is no need to praise the admirable miniature-work of Miss Matty, and the Honourable Mrs. Jamieson, and Miss Pole. It is a world of gentlewomen, mostly spinsters; and the men do little except make an ungenteel noise in it at intervals. The little sketch called *The Cage at Cranford* (1863) is in excellent keeping with the original idyll. A good number of the Cranford, or Knutsford, characters have been more or less identified; and it all has the air of real memories and stories that have been laid up in lavender for years.

Suddenly, after this triumph of gentle comedy, Mrs. Gaskell swung away to a tragic theme. She attempted in *Ruth* a story of seduction and persecution, ending in the death of the victim. She could hardly triumph in a region where Dickens and George Eliot fail, where Meredith does not quite succeed, and where few but Goethe and Victor Hugo are masters. The initial disaster, in fact, is timidly and badly hurried over, but it may be said that this is not the true centre of the book. Mrs. Gaskell puts all her energy into the sequel. Ruth is hounded down by society, and her fate is shown with much indignant and generous sympathy, if with a painful expenditure of hectic pathos. For the sake of her child she is persuaded by her friends to figure as a widow; and she is found out, and hunted all the more. Her stratagem was no doubt wrong, but it is made out to be the cause of all her later miseries, it becomes an inordinately argued and canvassed case of conscience, and Ruth herself thinks of it as almost a mortal sin. Mrs. Gaskell has an unlucky habit of commenting on and lashing up emotions which ought to be left to the story itself and to the

dialogue. Her power is much better shown in the minor characters who have their metal tested (and it mostly rings false) when they encounter Ruth and her problem. But in this story Mrs. Gaskell is hampered by her subject, and her tragic gift is far better seen in the short story of *Lois the Witch* (1859), founded on various actual records of the witch-killing age. Lois, a young English girl, good and innocent, is hanged in New England ; and the fanatical cruelty of her murderers, whether we call it Bedlamite or Satanic, is represented with a force which reminds us of Meinhold himself and of his *Amber Witch*. The atmosphere, the theological jargon, and the tribal rites of this agreeable community are reproduced with a skill which makes us wonder whether Mrs. Gaskell could not have written a remarkable historical novel.

VIII

But in her next long story, *Sylvia's Lovers*, which appeared eight years after *North and South*, she returned to the north of Britain. It is, on the whole, her most solid and admirable piece of fiction. The opening, which describes the topography, scenery, and humankind of Monkshaven on the north-east coast, is worthy of Balzac ; we at once know the place, within and without ; and it is presented without any touch of that gazetteer style which is the peril of the 'local novel.' The domestic scenes, which are natural and simple, are dexterously interwoven with pages full of angry colour and movement. The pressgang sweeping through the town, the fishermen watching the arriving ships, the bloodshed in the narrow alleys, the police approaching the solitary farmstead, all remind us of Crabbe's stories, without their sarcasm or their rhetoric. In contrast is the pretty Sylvia, who is kindly though somewhat didactically drawn. Sylvia seems and is feather-headed, but she comes out ; and it appears that she can love her lover obstinately, though it is harder to believe that she can or ought to forgive her square-toed traitor of a husband, Philip Hepburn ; on whose motives, on whose repentance, and on whose end a good deal of overwrought writing is bestowed. The true man, a sailor, something of a light-of-love in the past, and yet faithful now to Sylvia, is suddenly crimped. Before being carried off, he entrusts Philip with a message for Sylvia ; but Philip suppresses it, allows her to think the sailor dead, and marries her. But the sailor comes back, and does not behave in Enoch Arden fashion. Mrs. Gaskell confronts the two men, very

satisfactorily. Latterly her plot becomes too strong for her, and is wound up with melodrama and expedients. Still, of all her books, *Sylvia's Lovers* gives the best measure of her powers when at full stretch.

Wives and Daughters, an Everyday Story, was cut short by Mrs. Gaskell's death whilst it was appearing in the *Cornhill*; and Greenwood in his editorial note, or 'speech over the grave,' took occasion both to indicate the obvious ending and to describe Mrs. Gaskell's gift as a novelist. He credits her with 'some of the truest, purest works of fiction in the language,' and further with 'some of the choicest faculties bestowed upon mankind.' We need not go so far; but Greenwood touches justly on her power of finding matter for art in subjects that yield nothing to the ordinary novelist; in 'a discontented old gentleman smoking tobacco with his son,' or the 'miseries of a little girl sent to be happy in a fine house full of fine people.' These are passages from *Wives and Daughters*. He also specially praises the characterisation of Cynthia Kirkpatrick, who is, indeed, a sort of Beatrix on the parochial scale. She cannot help pleasing all men and provoking them to offer marriage; yet she simply cannot endure too much love in her existence, or persons of too exalted standards; and she throws over a high-minded scientific gentleman for ambition and a rising barrister. Roger, the man of science, she leaves to the heroine of the book, Molly Gibson, who has loved him all along. Every son of Adam will forgive Cynthia; but Mrs. Gaskell shows her skill in preserving our sympathy for the quiet-coloured Molly, whose virtues might easily have become tedious. But they do not; and part of the effect is gained by one curious convention, common in Victorian fiction. We are admitted to the inner feelings and struggles of one person in the tale, and one only, while the rest show themselves only by word and action. The person here is Molly Gibson. Such portrayal of motive in an ordinary girl is very hard to manage, yet it is perfectly achieved. Molly, indeed, acts as well as feels, and gets Cynthia out of a compromising mess, with much courage and at the risk of calumny. There may be rather too much lengthy reporting of tattle in *Wives and Daughters*; but the incidental drawing of character is expert and subtle, and kindly too.

Some of Mrs. Gaskell's shorter tales group themselves around, and throw light upon, one or other of her novels. *The Moorland Cottage* (1850), besides marking the change of scene from the black city of *Mary Barton* to the soft tame countryside of

Cranford, presents one of the author's favoured quiet heroines (not ill-favoured, however, like Charlotte Brontë's) and one of her frequent themes—the disgrace brought by the scapegrace son upon his family, and his sheltering by his loyal sister. *Mr. Harrison's Confessions* (1851) introduces Knutsford, under the name of Duncombe ; and though the drawing is not so microscopically nice as in *Cranford*, it is stronger both in satire and in pathos. Another series of tales, collected under the title of *Round the Sofa*, and set in a rather awkward framework, contains examples of most of the *genres* in which Mrs. Gaskell practised. The tales are told, or read out, by 'My Lady Ludlow,' an excellently though tediously described small great lady of the old school, or by persons in her circle. *Half a Lifetime Ago* is, like *Silas Marner*, a Wordsworthian story. The daleswoman, Susan Dixon, sacrifices her lover in order to keep her idiot brother, rather than send him to the cruel madhouse. The dialogue is in a succinct and final style which Mrs. Gaskell occasionally commands.

'Choose between him and me, Susy, for I swear to thee, thou shan't have both.'

'I have chosen,' said Susan, now perfectly composed and still. 'Whatever comes of it, I bide with Willie.'

'Very well,' replied Michael, trying to assume an equal composure of manner. 'Then I 'll wish you a very good night.'

Susan never marries, but lives to be 'gaunt, hard-featured, angular,' and 'peculiar and silent' ; and that is her story, well fitted for a 'lyrical ballad.' *The Doom of the Griffiths*, also to be found in *Round the Sofa*, is more like one of the old 'tales of terror' ; it turns on a prophetic curse by an injured woman, and the bill of mortality is high. Mrs. Gaskell is much attracted by fateful and preternatural subjects, and works very hard at them, but she seldom really touches the springs of terror. The *doppelgänger* in *The Poor Clare*, a hideous wraith-like counterpart of an innocent girl, alarms the other characters more than it can the reader. But when Mrs. Gaskell does not try to frighten, she can summon up most agreeable ghosts. In *Curious if True*, Mr. Richard Whittingham dreams himself into a seventeenth-century *salon* where the talk is on the late Cardinal de Retz, and which is also a fairyland ; he is mistaken for his almost namesake, and is asked after the health of his cat.

On the whole Mrs. Gaskell is best in depicting this world, and best also when she avoids murder and sudden death. A *Dark Night's Work* is one of her most ambitious melodramas,

somewhat infantine in construction; but here and always there is some good characterisation. Sometimes she has an excellent and simple plot, with tragical elements. *The Manchester Marriage*, a tale of the Enoch Arden type, is an example. The husband, supposed to be dead, turns up: turning up is one of the commonest of all occurrences in Mrs. Gaskell's pages; but the real interest hinges on the loyal old servant who saves the situation; and with a loyal old servant she can always be trusted. Others, again, of her short compositions leave a strong sense of her mobile and unexhausted power of observation; the little German idyll in *Six Weeks at Heppenheim* is most delicately done, without a touch of mawkishness. Of her English idylls the best is *Cousin Phillis* (1863-4), one of her latest writings. The narrator is a crudish but not ill-conditioned youth; and for an authoress to get into his skin so completely, and that without a single mistake or false touch to bewray her sex, is a notable feat; and the delightful Phillis and her father the minister have the same truth and distinctness. This story, and many another of Mrs. Gaskell's, is pervaded by the leisure and composure of the English country, with the scents and sounds of the hayfield. Life goes slowly there, except when the drama quickens; and there is time to taste it as it passes.

IX

Miss Charlotte Mary Yonge[1] (1823-1901) grew up under the shadow of Hurley Vicarage; the plots and manuscripts of her tales were often seen and corrected by Keble, who was a sound critic of form and composition; and the piety of her circle, and also its refinement, which comports well with abundance of humour and cheerful spirits, is better mirrored in her books than in many a sermon and pamphlet. They are an obvious transcript from experience, and it is made with simple yet sufficient art; it brings us near to the life of a thousand families. Miss Yonge is a kind of feminine, devout Trollope on a small scale, without his massiveness and without his commonness; she is much occupied with depicting very young people. Perhaps a little of her now may go a long way; but that is due, not to any failure of veracity or skill on her own part, but to the bounded conventions of the kind of life that she describes. Some novelists draw a particular social stratum, as others keep to Yorkshire or Wessex. Miss Yonge keeps chiefly to a section of the professional class—doctors, clergy, their sailor sons, their womenkind, and their boys and girls at

school. But most of her characters have one trait in common: they are religious, or are very near religion. Hardly any one is frankly secular; and this constitutes another difference from Trollope, few of whose personages are otherwise. Miss Yonge's readers included not only the large population which she describes, but William Morris, and some of his companions, and many more; and her best work is still most readable; and if she had not published more than a hundred volumes—many of them historical, ecclesiastical, or educational—there would have been more to say concerning her. But, as so often happens in this period, the enormous and disconcerting fertility of the author, which feeds the appetite of the public, becomes the despair of the critic.

The Heir of Redclyffe (1853) was the first, and, with *The Daisy Chain* (1856), was the greatest of her popular triumphs. It won its way upon its merits, with all the world, and not merely with those who liked its High Church sentiment. The religious note is delicate and sincere, and not artistically obtrusive; it is in keeping with the lively and extreme tenderness of conscience that marks most of the *dramatis personæ*. Doubtless they repent of their errors, tempers, and passions with a speed and anxiety that are not customary among men. Yet manifestly such people did exist. The draughtsmanship is nice; and the landscape is pensively drawn, much in the spirit of *The Christian Year*. The best portrait is that of the full-blown prig, Philip Morville, whose letter of advice to his uncle is almost worthy of Jane Austen. But the authoress, while full of irony at Morville's expense, subordinates that strain to the business of reforming his frailties by means of adversity and prosperity. The sarcastic cripple Charles, who acts as chorus, is admirable too; and the family chatter, like the whole domestic scene, is so good that it only needs a little less copiousness, another touch of art, to make it perfect of its sort. So, in the schoolboy passages of *The Daisy Chain*, Miss Yonge describes the psychology, as it is now called, of cribbing and tart-stealing, and of the remorse and penitence ensuing, better than most of the male authors who may have committed such offences. In *The Trial*, where the same family reappears grown up, she caters for the fashion of the day, and admits a murder and the accusation of an innocent youth; but the exhibition of crime is not her *métier*; and, though all ends fairly, the feelings are too monotonously wrung, and dying is too frequent an occurrence. The characters, however, remain distinct and consistent.

The same can be said of the viscount, the hoyden, and the housemaid in the story of *Dynevor Terrace* (1857), where the canvas is larger and the scene extends to Peru. The social force of the *patria potestas* in Miss Yonge's world startles the reader of to-day. This appears above all in the article of marriage. Adult young women, and young men too, give up their loves without a murmur when so bidden by papa, or even by mamma. The good young persons are intensely conscientious in all their deeds ; and most of the young persons are good, except when they are decidedly bad ; and even if they are bad, they are usually at last brought into a right and painful state of mind. The appeal to directly religious motive is strong ; but obedience and virtue are first of all matters of good breeding and of good feeling. Miss Yonge is less often remarked for her rather highly-wrought but happy touches of English scenery ; it is in such passages that she comes nearest to rhythm and eloquence. In another tale, *The Clever Woman of the Family*, there is a different kind of severity, more appropriate to the comic muse. The 'clever woman' is a theorist, a blunderer, and an interferer ; and she is continually put to shame and eclipsed by the intuitive women, who are either good or charming, or both. And she is disciplined by the authoress with a really appalling harshness, of course in order to 'bring out the real Rachel' ; and is at last allowed to become a happy docile wife. The story is deftly told, and the unlucky Rachel clearly represents Miss Yonge's conception of the danger of mental independence in a woman. It is a far cry from Hurley to Haworth, or to Harriet Martineau.

One of Miss Yonge's most pleasing works is her short historical novel, *The Lances of Lynwood* (1855). It is written for young readers, but without false simplicity ; it is brief, unlike her modern stories ; and it is founded on bits of Froissart. Clisson, the butcher, is also heard of in Morris's volume of three years later. Miss Yonge, she also, is touched by the mediæval revival ; and she produces an ingenious little Walter Scott romance of chivalry and edification, introducing the Black Prince, and Du Guesclin, and a 'Jewish mediciner,' and many orthodox but very satisfactory knights, ladies, pages, and traitors ; and doing it all, in her way, a good deal better than most of Sir Walter's male imitators, without too many 'gramercies.'

X

Mrs. Margaret Oliphant[1] (1828-97) did not like being praised for the industry which made her one of the most prolific writers of the century, and which did much to swamp her nice and authentic talent. Writing came to her as easily as breathing; hard circumstance drove her to pour out books; and the greater part of her ninety stories, her hundred articles, her literary histories and biographies have sunk into the sand. Her autobiography is pathetic and even heroic in strain. The depth and strength of heart and the elastic courage which sustained her through many bereavements, and which give vitality to the best of her stories, were recognised, like her skill, by both the Carlyles, by Kinglake, and by other difficult judges. Her modest independence of view appears when she is speaking of George Eliot: 'no one will even mention me in the same breath with George Eliot. And that is just.' And yet, though not in malice, she fails to admire *Felix Holt*, finds the sibyl's letters dreary, and observes:

> I think she must have been a dull woman with a great genius distinct from herself, something like the gift of the old prophets, which they sometimes exercised with only a dim sort of perception of what it meant.

But she shall be mentioned here in the same breath with George Eliot. Her *Salem Chapel* is not only a much better novel than *Felix Holt*, which also introduces us to Nonconformist circles, but it is a very good novel. Mrs. Oliphant, when she finds time to concentrate, can produce a living and faithful picture of remote provincial manners. She has also a real, though somewhat uncertain, command of pathos, especially in her representation of girls and women. And she has further a true vein of mystical-supernatural fancy; not Dickens-like, or Lyttonish, or sham-German, or anything but her own. Amongst her endless miscellaneous writings should be mentioned her share in *Annals of a Publishing House: William Blackwood and his Sons* (1897), a work which is full of curious matter, and a contribution to the history of English authorship.

Like Anthony Trollope, and perhaps encouraged by his success, Mrs. Oliphant, in her best-known group of stories, invents for her background an imaginary small country town—hardly a county town. Her Carlingford is less important than Barchester; it has no bishop, it has no dean; only a rector, a 'perpetual curate,' and a dissenting minister, with their

several families, congregations, 'spheres,' and love affairs. In the three or four instalments of *The Chronicles of Carlingford* (1863-6) the clergy, with their wives and flocks, are the chief actors. Mrs. Oliphant is deeply acquainted with the chapel, the schoolroom, the family life and manners of the deacon-butterman and the cheesemonger-clerk. The jealous ideas of the vicar's lady, the parish tattle, the way in which scandal spreads, have no secrets from her. She understands and conveys the horror of the high-and-dry aunts in *The Perpetual Curate* (1864), when their nephew puts a bunch of flowers on the altar. She shows a particular skill in presenting either hard or soft old ladies. *Salem Chapel* (1863) relates the trials of a young minister, by birth a gentleman, who arrives with lofty plans for 'raising' his congregation and finds himself not only rebuffed, but bored and victimised by its vulgar curiosity. His mother, a mild lady with a diplomatic tongue who routs the inquiries, is most subtly drawn. Mrs. Oliphant, like her contemporaries, could not resist bringing crime and intrigue into these surroundings; but she is more at home in satire than in scenes of violence and passion. She is happily free from pedantry and preaching, the two chief vices of the female novelist. It would be hard to acquit her, perhaps, of one failing; she sometimes lets her fools, especially her she-fools, talk too long and become too real. We can hardly blame her for the general prolixity, which besets the fiction of the time and which is partly due to the tyrannous demand of the public, or of the book-vendor, for three volumes. Some of her earlier writings have a real perfume and idyllic charm. *Passages in the Life of Mrs. Margaret Maitland* (1849) is hardly a novel; the teller is a Scottish spinster, very simple and devout, who lives in the life of the young people around her; and the clear gentle flow of her narrative, with its native idiom never overdone, would have been admired, we may surmise, by the creator of Jeanie Deans. Mrs. Oliphant had also a vein of fantasy, and one of her experiments in the supernatural, *A Beleaguered City* (1880), has become one of the classics (they are few) of its own species. Lytton's attempts—though not to be despised—to play on the chord of terror seem forced and theatrical in comparison. The dream-feeling of unseen and overpowering presences, which weigh upon a whole population and dislocate human life, is conveyed with the greatest skill.

XI

The many-coloured writings of Charles Kingsley [1] (1819-75) include not only the fiction in which he did his best and amplest work, but fantasies, notes of travel, essays, lectures, pamphlets, sermons, and a handful of verses. His outward career was a simple one. He went to Cambridge, took orders, and in 1844 became rector of Eversley, near Windsor, where he stayed all his life, travelling occasionally. He began with verse, *The Saint's Tragedy* appearing in 1848. But the public events of that year intensified the flame of practical enthusiasm, and of sympathy with the popular cause, which had already long been kindled by his admiration for Carlyle and still more by his ties with Frederick Denison Maurice. Under Maurice's leadership, and in alliance with Thomas Hughes and the band of 'Christian Socialists,' Kingsley, under the signature of 'Parson Lot,' [2] became the tract-writer to that movement; plunging in *Politics for the People* and elsewhere into propaganda, and acquiring the fervid, blunt, and direct style which was afterwards to serve him ill in disputation. Another fruit of these activities is seen in his first two stories, *Yeast* (1848) and *Alton Locke* (1850). During the same decade he rapidly produced the best of his novels, *Hypatia* (1853), *Westward Ho!* (1855), and *Two Years Ago* (1857); and also *The Heroes* (1856), where he retells in prose for young readers the tales of Perseus, the Argonauts, and Theseus. During the Sixties Kingsley held the Regius Professorship of Modern History at Cambridge; some of his lectures (*The Roman and the Teuton*, etc.) are published, but are of little mark. In 1864 came his dialectical discomfiture by Newman (see Ch. VIII.), but the elastic Kingsley soon returned to his proper work, and wrote *Hereward the Wake* (1866) and also many excellent short things. His last years show no decline; there is a youthful freshness in the beautiful *Prose Idylls* (1873) and also in *At Last* (1871), a journal of his voyage to the West Indies.

Yeast, which first appeared in *Fraser's* in 1848, and in completer form as a book (1851), is scarcely a novel, though it reveals the future novelist: it has scenery, poetry, passion; and it contains a gallery of characters, most of whom are social types rather than persons. The hero, Lancelot Smith, is the truth-seeker, the spirit in ferment, who passes from the merely intellectual life, which Carlyle and the Germans have quickened in him, to become a social reformer and idealist, and at last a Maurician Christian. The noble gamekeeper, a man of the

people, the devout Argemone, and the mysterious Barnakill, take their turns in the formation of Smith, who at last vanishes fantastically. There is also a repellent young Tractarian cleric, bound Romewards ; a painter who cares too much for beauty ; a great man of business, a peer, honest but impervious to ideas ; and there are many more personages, painted in glaring colours, in a slapdash style, and producing a confused unreal effect. The most distinct character that we encounter is the author, who is himself full of ' yeast.' His book is a kind of pamphlet-fantasy ; it is aflame with his generous ardour, with his imaginative flashes and with his sympathy for the classes who are apathetic under oppression. The pictures of the poor man's cottage, and also of the fox-hunt, announce his characteristic power.

An abundance, nay exuberance, of generous zeal ; headlong impetuosity of determination towards the manful side of all manner of questions ; snatches of excellent poetic description, occasional sun-bursts of noble insight ; everywhere a certain wild intensity . . . Saunders Mackaye . . . a wonderfully splendid and coherent piece of Scotch *bravura*.

These remarks of Carlyle hold good of other writings of Kingsley's, and cannot be improved upon as a judgement of *Alton Locke, Tailor and Poet, an Autobiography*. Here Kingsley gives his view of the true division between political and social parties : ' the Church, the gentleman, and the workman, against the shopkeepers and the Manchester school.' The workman, in spite of the Christian socialists, by no means accepted this stratification ; but it shows how Kingsley, so far from being either a philosophical or a Hyde Park Radical, had his own notion, which was not exactly Disraeli's, of ' Tory democracy.' The raw, often turbid harangues and questionings of the speakers in the story must therefore be treated as dramatic rather than as the voice of the author. But the surge of the Chartist years is in the pages of *Alton Locke* ; they can still stir us ; but its real power lies not in its ideas but in its pictures. The Cambridge races, the rick-burning, the sweating-shop, are presented with a passionate force and colour which Kingsley was never to outdo. The delirium of Alton Locke is described with the same sort of power ; it is possible that Kingsley had been studying the *Dream-Fugue*, to which it hardly yields, at least in point of intensity ; for the figure of Lillian recurs in vision after vision like that of De Quincey's despairing lady.

Gibbon,[1] to whom Kingsley is less than fair, betrays an unusual severity of disgust in recording the butchery of the beautiful Neo-Platonist Hypatia by the Christian horde in their own sanctuary. Kingsley's book and Pater's *Marius the Epicurean* are the only two English novels dealing with the early ages of the Church that have any claim to distinction; beside them, the *Callistas* and *Fabiolas* are poor, doctored, partisan things. It is easy to say that Hypatia herself is lifeless, like a Leighton picture, or that she is a mere voice discoursing; that the Jew aristocrat Aben-Ezra is an artificial figure; and that the intellectual workmanship does not compete with that in *Marius*. But what of that? Kingsley came near to achieving one of the most splendid feats of the historical novelist. For all his headlong style, he shows a true dramatic sympathy with the various creeds, pagan and Jew as well as Christian; the descriptions of the Goths in their vessel, of the Jew riot, and of the arena are great painting, and Orestes the prefect and Cyril the patriarch, and Philammon the monk are alive and distinct. The dialogue, though vehement, and the philosophical and theological passages, though carefully studied, leave us cold in comparison with the passion and action of the story itself.

Westward Ho! is rather a saga than a novel with a plot; it is a string of episodes in the life-history of the hero. Yet the episodes rise in power, the most splendid of them coming latest; the colour glowing ever more richly and not less truly, as the author quits the West country scenery which he knew, for that of the New World, of which he had only read. There is a tide of enthusiasm, both patriotic and imaginative, which never ebbs. Like Scott, Kingsley makes his invented not less real than his historical personages. He dashes at the fence; he puts in the mouth of Spenser, Raleigh, and Grenville words that fit quite well enough for a pageant-play. Among the Spaniards and Indians, and in the company of Ayacanora, he slips away from his aim of re-imagining the old English world in its setting of familiar scenery, into equally lawful and delightful romance; and he also recovers the kind of wonder and the feeling of expansion that stirred the Elizabethan explorers themselves. The Christian in Kingsley combats with the natural man just as it does in the hearts of his buccaneers, though more successfully; and his dramatic sympathy is never marred. Scholars have remarked on the singular but successful feat of rhythm [2] which he performs in the last great recital of the blinded Amyas Leigh: a chant which is nearer to verse (though not

blank verse) than it is to prose, but which yet is not wholly either.

In *Two Years Ago* there is too much of the pulpit ; Kingsley is himself again whenever he gets back to landscape or to narrative. Not that he constructs well, for the story jumps about without mercy from one group of characters to another ; and they are drawn, for the most part, not indeed feebly, but rudely, as though with a stump ; a method fitting enough in the case of the blunt and rough hero, Tom Thurnall, who fills the foreground. The Berkshire countryside, and the western fishing shore, and Snowdon, are not done with the stump at all, but painted delightedly and in glowing colour. Equally excellent is the gallant fight of Thurnall against the cholera and against the ignorance and callousness which refuse to believe in its coming. It is a pity that Kingsley invents, with a certain complicity, the yarn of a miraculous judgement falling upon the sinner who has been denounced from the pulpit and who is promptly swooped on by the disease. But we could forgive more than this for the picture of the man in delirium tremens, who 'fell, and lay rolling, trying in vain to shield his face from the phantom wasps.'

Hereward the Wake shows some fatigue, at least in its plan ; the professor is often too much for the artist ; it is clogged by lump after lump of historical narrative, conscientiously yet confusedly told ; the story is kept going by the incidents. Hereward's killing of the bear, and his interview in disguise with William, and his many frays and escapes, show no failure of hand at all. The ransoming of the abbot in the greenwood, with its premature though pleasant atmosphere of balladry, is in another style ; and the sorceries and bannings, if they are very much of the old Waverley stock, are pleasing too. Kingsley's poetic and historic vision is nowhere more vivid than in his descriptions of the East Anglian fens and minsters.

XII

The Heroes have held generations of young readers, who do not mind a certain unrestraint and high pitch of language—qualities, be it said, far commoner in the 'classics' themselves than is always recognised. But the style does not condescend to the young reader, or he would have found it out long ago ; and not much is cut out or added for his good ; a few details are softened, a few edifying words thrown in, and the story of Glauce is omitted from the story of Jason. *The Heroes*, having

no single original on which they are based, hardly compare as a feat of style with Lamb's *Adventures of Ulysses*, but they are true literature; and their rhythm, amongst other features, is worthy study. It has its own beauty and character, like that of the passage, already mentioned, in *Westward Ho!* and it is equally 'outside the liberties.' There are not many blank lines in it, but it is sown broadcast with scraps of dactylic or anapæstic singsong.

And he sáng | of the bírth | of Tíme, || and the héavens | and the dáncing | stárs || ; and of the ócean, | and the éther, | and the fíre, || and the sháping | of the wóndrous | eárth. || And he sáng | of the treásures | of the hílls, || and the hídden | jéwels | of the míne, || and the veíns | of fíre | and métal . . .

There is also another movement,[1] which would easily turn into the metre of *Andromeda*; and the subject, in fact, is the same:

Ón | came the : greát | seà : mónster, || coásting | a : lóng | like a : húge | blàck gálley, || lázily | breásting | the : rípple, || and : stópping | at : tímes | by : creek | or : heádland, || to wátch | for the : laúghter | of : gírls | at their : bleáching.|

In *The Heroes*, above all, Kingsley's descriptive style is transparent; we attend to the picture and do not merely marvel at the words; and the same remark is true of William Morris. A pretty comparison could be made with the passage on the account of the Symplegades, or 'Clashers,' in *The Life and Death of Jason*; the prose, I think, gives yet a clearer impression than the verse, but in both there is transparency:

> the steaming clouds of spray,
> Cast by the meeting hammers every way,
> Quite hid the polished bases from their sight . . .
> But sometimes 'twixt the clouds the sun would pass
> And show the high rocks glittering like glass,
> Quivering, as far beneath the churned-up waves
> Were ground together the strong-arched caves.

And soon they saw the blue rocks shining like spires and castles of grey glass, while an ice-cold wind blew from them and chilled all the heroes' hearts. And as they neared they could see them heaving, as they rolled upon the long sea-waves, crashing and grinding together, till the roar went up to heaven . . .

Kingsley, in the matter of descriptive eloquence, is a disciple, though no mere disciple, of Ruskin; and Ruskin, in his earlier writing, is often not transparent at all, but distracts us by his eloquence from the thing seen, and also from what Kingsley calls his 'stern precision of conception and expression.' The same is often true of Tennyson; but Clough in his *Bothie*, and

Matthew Arnold in his *Thyrsis*, have the quality I am looking for; and in Turgénev's records of steppe and forest it never fails. But we must be grateful too for Kingsley's fervid picturesqueness, which is another sort of excellence, and which is founded on his close knowledge and affectionate watching of natural objects. It is perhaps best seen in his *Prose Idylls*. The *Chalk-Stream Studies*, *The Fens*, and *The Charm of Birds* anticipate, in point of observant faculty, the quieter and more patient studies of Richard Jefferies; there is the sense of excited enjoyment in them all; and Kingsley also gives, what Ruskin does not, the sense of action; he has instinct of the sportsman, and something male and primitive in his composition. It all seems dashed off, with little word-trimming or revision, and though some confusion in the impression is the result, it is the confusion of nature herself. This effect is well in keeping in the West Indian scenery of *At Last*. With the zest and eye of the naturalist he describes Trinidad, and the High Woods, and the crabs with eyes on stalks, and the water-snakes, and the rites of Obeah. There is a tropical strain, now 'at last' satisfied, in the fancy of this fighting cleric. He plunges right into the forest, and sets down what he sees, stopping now and then to jerk out a devout reflection.

The Water-Babies has proved its popularity with its destined readers, but is a good book badly spoilt. It is easy to recall what a new world it seemed at first to disclose, with its dream-like bright confusion, its wicked Mr. Grimes, and its humorous communings with real lobsters and salmon. Then came the two moral fairies, still imposing yet somehow vaguely suspect; and latterly, endless strange tedious sneers concerning grown-up topics and persons, leading to pure headache. Kingsley, as he went on with his fantasy, seems to have had a fit of mildly Rabelaisian satire, for he gives long facetious lists of particulars, which the grown-up taste does not relish either. In *Madam How and Lady Why* he also addresses very young people, and, in spite of a certain Sunday school tone, talks of earthquakes, volcanoes, and atolls with a charming simplicity. *Glaucus; or, The Wonders of the Sea Shore*, is less direct, and is fuller of disquisition, but has been very popular.

XIII

Kingsley's poetic power, which is most genuine, is chiefly confined to lyric and narrative. His early play on St. Elizabeth of Hungary, *The Saint's Tragedy*, while carefully studied from

the sources, is rhetorical; *St. Maura* and *Sappho*, in blank verse, are too visibly Tennysonian. In *Andromeda* no poet is remembered except Homer; yet, despite the epic similes and turns of phrase, it has a careful burnish, and a rich pure sea-shell colouring not to be found in any other 'Hellenic' save one or two of Landor's. Kingsley's eye for the water, with its creatures and its tangle, and his delight in youth and beauty, never fail him. He aims, he says, at 'clearness and objectivity,' and he attains them. Over the hexameter verse he took much pains, and his letters contain a very penetrating discussion of its difficulties.

I do think that, with proper care, you may have as many spondees, without hurting the rhythm, in English, as you have in Greek, and my ear is tortured by a trochee instead.

His 'spondees,' 'dreád queên,' 'seá-gírt,' are real ones, and not the usual bastard 'trochees'; and the doubtful forms intermediate between the two, and common in English, he distinguishes with much delicacy. Also he finds that he is not compelled to be more 'dactylic' than Homer; and the whole effect well suits 'the rush and the roll and the roaring' of *Andromeda*. His archaic ballads are not the happiest of his shorter pieces; he is at his best when he sings. The tunes of *Airly Beacon*, *The Starlings*, and one or two more, are almost equal to those of *The Three Fishers* and *The Sands of Dee*. Nor must the followings of the old alliterative verse, which are sown about *Hypatia* and *Hereward the Wake*, be forgotten; they are more accurate in metre, and in spirit nearer to the best of the old poetry, than Tennyson's actual translation, well as it rings, of the somewhat stereotyped *Battle of Brunanburh*. Kingsley wrote other, more declamatory, verses, such as *The Bad Squire* and *Alton Locke's Song* (1848), which have the ring of a more than factitious passion. He is one of the few poets of the time who make us wish cordially that he had written more.

A foreigner who should really understand Kingsley's brother-in-arms, Thomas Hughes (1822-96), would have matriculated in his study of the English character. A country gentleman and sportsman, like some personage in Meredith, and also a barrister and public man, Hughes is a kind of John Bull regenerate. Trained and awakened at Rugby by Arnold, he fell under the guidance of Maurice, and laboured among the Christian Socialists, as a 'broad churchman,' and a champion of the workers; in his day he was thought a Radical. Hughes wrote

a good deal, but is remembered in literature for his *Tom Brown's School Days*, which appeared in 1857. The humours of his schoolboys are simple and natural ; their cruelties and crudities, which would be unbearable in a mere photograph, are softened and selected without being falsified. The didactic note in the book, like the atmosphere of rather painful moral tension among the good boys, is also dramatically true ; it is not a fault in the story at all ; it is a record of the time and place. The great Arnold dominates the scene, formidably, just as he did in fact. This novel, it has been justly said, ' did a great deal to fix the English concept of what a public school [1] should be.'

XIV

Henry Kingsley (1830-76), one of the novelists who are always being happily rediscovered, was a far less remarked and successful figure ; but he is not eclipsed by his elder brother. He had no public career, and he had no such purely intellectual baggage to enrich or encumber him. He has a rougher and more primitive manliness than Charles, and just as thirsty an eye for colour and action. He also has the great advantage of having lived himself among violent exotic scenes, having gone in early youth to the Australian gold mines and stayed there obscurely for five years. They supply part of the background to *Geoffrey Hamlyn* (1859) and to *The Hillyars and the Burtons* (1865), both produced after his return home. *Ravenshoe* (1861) describes passages in the Crimean war. Henry Kingsley was himself a war correspondent in 1870, and he did other journalistic work.

As a novelist he reminds us less of his brother than of Charles Reade. He cannot write either so well or so ill as Reade, and he has no reformer's axe to grind. But he has the same interest in mankind reduced to its simplest terms ; that is, in a ' state of war,' or in peril of its life, and up against the wall, and there acting suitably. His plots are nothing ; they are melodrama without composition. His characters, especially his ' lags ' and diggers, and some of his gentlemen and English girls, are sharp and clear enough in outline ; but Henry Kingsley's true strength is in description. His Australian landscape is admirable. He gives a plain, vivid, unhindered impression of a dangerous event, without any literary fringes ; whether it be a cyclone, or a storm at sea, or a free fight in a police trap, or the actions of a man swimming for his life, and for his son's life, against time and a poisonous water-snake ; or the charge of the Light Brigade. And he wrote one simple-seeming piece

of verse, ' Magdalen at Michael's gate tirled at the pin,' which is of piercing quality.

Amongst, or rather aloof from, the historical and religious novels of the time is the *John Inglesant* of John Henry Shorthouse (1834-1903). It was the book of the year 1880 ; ran through nine editions in twelve months ; was remarked and praised by Gladstone and Acton, and by Catholic readers of either faith, and by the historians, and by the larger public ; and awakened hopes, not to be borne out, of better work from the same hand. Shorthouse, who thus came into note, was a Birmingham manufacturer. Brought up a Quaker, he was captured by the Oxford movement, by Ruskin, by romanticism generally, and in particular by the writings of the religious mystics and of the Renaissance occultists. For his romance he found a natural setting in the English and Italian history of the seventeenth century. Inglesant is a royalist, a pupil of the Jesuits, and their implement or intermediary in the privy dealings between Anglican and Papist. He is also a seeker after the peace of the interior life, and a seer of visions, and he is a little crazed, but is otherwise the pattern of chivalry and of ' the broad stone of honour.' He, then, is the theatre of sundry conflicting loyalties and creeds, as well as of many preternatural visitings ; and, like all heroes who are invented in order to *mean* something, and not in order to *be* somebody, he has little unity, and is not particularly real. Also the lumps of history, theology, exhortation, and Rosicrucianism lie heavy on the solemn page. Many historical persons are introduced. As we should expect, Henry More the Platonist speaks much more in character than Milton, and Molinos the Quietist than Hobbes (who is actually made to call himself a follower of Plato). But there are admirable passages and moments in *John Inglesant*. The Italian chapters are a notable feat for an untravelled writer, and are much more persuasive than those of *Romola*. Some of the writing is in the best *Anglican* style ; by which I mean a style that is studiously toned and refined, with a certain temperate melody of its own ; rather elaborate, yet lucid ; solemn, but not pompous ; shunning alike the Roman unction and the Protestant emphasis ; and over-shy, on the whole, of all emphasis and salience whatever, good or otherwise. Shorthouse, however, has a dramatic sense. The scenes where Inglesant lies to the tribunal in order to screen King Charles, and where he finds his brother slain, and where he at last finds and spares the murderer, might well have been ' passed ' by Thackeray.

As I have said, during this period the map of Britain is being steadily surveyed and filled in by the novelists : Yorkshire, Warwickshire, London. The Highlands and the West country were also annexed. The prolific William Black (1841-98), with whom fiction became an industry rather than an art, changed his scenery from time to time, but continually returned to the Highlands. One of his first tales, *A Daughter of Heth* (1871), has a Lowland background, and is full of a sentiment and delicacy which almost attain to pathos. The irruption and conquest of a severe minister's household by a charming French cousin, Coquette, is told with skill ; but we regret the needless deathbed, the extinction of Coquette, and the kind of inverted sentimentalism that craves for an unhappy ending. Black's gifts are better shown in *A Princess of Thule* (1874), which relates the troubles of a Highland girl in London, burdened with a blundering husband. Here, as in *The Strange Adventures of a Phaeton* (1872), and elsewhere, country life and landscape are described, no doubt with a superflux of colour-adjectives, but still with affection and close acquaintance ; nor is the prettiness of the narrative false prettiness. There is a touch of the grace of Clough's *Bothie* in Black's lochs and damsels. The tyranny of the regulation three volumes made him too copious ; and it seems to be a counsel of prudence, if not of art, that an idyll should be short.

An earlier and stronger practitioner of local fiction, Richard Doddridge Blackmore (1825-1900), is also, like so many Victorian writers, in some measure ' strangled with ' his ' waste fertility,' like Nature ; but she gave him many gifts. He is an observer of country things ; the West of England found no such recorder, apart from Charles Kingsley, until a greater artist, Mr. Hardy, arose. Blackmore's peasants, carriers, wrestlers and Devonshire maidens are most watchfully described. He can make his talk in dialect more than bearable. The Devonian—expansive, emotional, humorous, as unlike the traditional Briton as can be, and with plenty of the South in his composition—is most congenially presented. It must be said that Blackmore is often a poor plotter ; his abductions, his murders, his melodrama, hardly bear looking into, and are a mere peg for the characterisation. His first story, *Clara Vaughan* (1864), shows power, but is an immature thing. *Lorna Doone, A Romance of Exmoor* (1869), a story with a romantic-historical setting (which serves to introduce Judge Jefferies and Monmouth) is ever fresh, and pleases each new generation, despite a certain looseness and high-pitched effusiveness in its style. But for

idyll, scenery, adventure, and fighting, all taken together, the story of Ridd, Faggus, and the Doones, as a feat in sheer romantic narrative, is hard to equal. *The Maid of Sker* (1872), the scene of which is laid farther north, has some of the same qualities, but is heavier. And, in spite of an absurd plot, *Cripps the Carrier* (1876) savours still of the countryside, and has the breath of life in it. *Springhaven* (1887), which introduces Napoleon, Nelson, and George the Third, has an excellent plot; the escape of Scudamore from a French prison, and the blowing-up of the traitor Carne by his own powder-casks, are scenes that would do honour to any novel of adventure. Altogether, Blackmore has much life and substance in him, and his colours have faded little.

XV

Among the pleasant entertainers who flourished towards the end of this period should be included the partners Walter, afterwards Sir Walter, Besant (1836-1901), and James Rice (1843-82). The successful *Ready-Money Mortiboy* (1872) was followed by *The Golden Butterfly* (1876); the benevolent American, Gilead Beck, in the latter story, is an excellent stage type. Here, and in *The Monks of Thelema* and many other books, Besant and Rice did harmless, ingenious, and cheerful work. Their stuff is light, but so is their hand. After the death of Rice, Besant, who had the more solid equipment, produced in the same year, 1882, two stories of more interest. One, *The Revolt of Man*, is a satiric fantasy, like *The Princess*, at the expense of 'women's rights.' At first woman rules, and man is tamed and chaperoned, as in Lytton's *Coming Race*; but a young lord arises to overthrow the female polity by force of arms, and all is much as before. In this rather elementary tale Besant contrives to make some sharp points. *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*, which inspired the plan of a 'people's palace,' is full of first-hand pictures of the East End, as beheld by a kindly gentleman whose optimism had been severely startled. Besant introduces Dickens-like melodrama and 'humours' into his story, but he also has a share of his master's love for mankind. He long continued to write, producing more stories, and also useful works, historical and descriptive, on London; and he laboured on sound lines in order to organise the rights, and secure the commercial status, of authors. An equally genial and yet more industrious lightener of dull hours, James Payn (1830-98), was long editor of *Chambers's Journal*, and afterwards, in succession to Sir Leslie Stephen, of the

Cornhill. Payn is full of shrewd fun and whimsical observing faculty. His *Lost Sir Massingberd* (1864) is a good old-fashioned novel of manners and mystery; nor need *By Proxy* (1878) be forgotten; but Payn ground too incessantly in the mill of journalism and fiction to do himself justice.

The busy looms of Mary Elizabeth Braddon, afterwards Mrs. John Maxwell (1837-1915), hummed and produced incessantly for more than forty years: she was always sure of an eager market. Many dozens of well-jointed, ingenious tales, never pretending to deal in more than obvious mystery and honest sentiment, stand to her credit. She began in 1862, with *Lady Audley's Secret*, during the full vogue of criminal fiction; succeeding at once, and maintaining her success, with a public superior to that of Mrs. Henry Wood. *Aurora Floyd* was another very popular example of her craft. One of her typical situations can be found in *Henry Dunbar* (1864), where A is thought to have murdered B; but in truth it is B who has first murdered, and who now cheerfully personates, A. Miss Braddon's skill in providing such innocent entertainment lasted long; one of her latest stories, *Mary*, contains an allusion to the *Ballad of Reading Gaol*. From her works, too, literature is absent; yet she remained acceptable longer than many a genuine writer of her day.

XVI

The rest of this chapter must be in the nature of a postscript. I profess to write only of books which retain some readable and present value, and not to marshal the ghosts of mere purveyors, however great their vogue. Still it is not amiss to glance awhile at some ordinary merchandise, which often only differs from what is good by the lack of the requisite talent, but resembles it in machinery of plot or situation, and still more in the social conventions it describes. Only stray examples need be taken, though they are not taken at random; nor shall I try to exhaust the types at disposal. The stories of 'Ouida' and of George Alfred Lawrence will not be enumerated on the one part, nor those of Mrs. Henry Wood and Mrs. Craik on the other; but the first pair will provide instances of the novel of extravagance and pseudo-passion, and the second pair instances of convention and pseudo-morality. They are all species of *absurd* fiction, much affected by the grandparents of the generation that is now young. Absurd they all are; and yet there is always something to explain their marketable

quality. The market has changed, not in the least owing to the operations of refined criticism, or through any advance in the general taste, but through the play of its own laws, just as it has changed in the article of hats and waistcoats. Other sorts of extravagance or convention rule instead.

The conventional species may come first, for the extravagant species is in a sense its offspring, being prompted by a spirit of helpless revolt against it. Mrs. Henry Wood (1814-87), the authoress of *East Lynne* (1861), which still survives in melodrama, and of *The Channings* (1862), wrote hosts of other stories ; but *The Channings* may be chosen here. She usually salts her sentimental and family scenes with a due allowance of criminality ; and her plots, however simple-minded, are made with a certain skill. In *The Channings* there is a banknote which can only have been stolen by one of three young persons, two of whom are brothers. The innocent younger brother is accused, but defends himself half-heartedly, for fear of betraying his elder brother, whom he (as well as the reader) suspects of the theft. The real thief is the third youth, who finally bolts leaving a confession, and who has given the careful reader some, but not much, clue to his guilt. That is all the story ; there is also an abundance of schoolboy humours, which are excellent in an old-fashioned way. But the general setting is one of intense religiosity and of governess morality. The book opens to the sound of cathedral bells ; its last sentence is a text in capital letters ; and this combination of piety, crime, and happy ending just suited Mrs. Wood's gallery or kitchen public.

John Halifax, Gentleman (1856), by Dinah Maria Mulock, afterwards Mrs. Craik (1826-87), is a work of larger ambition, and displays some narrative skill ; but the style is flushed and exalted, and the religious sentiment mostly in *falsetto*. It was most popular. John Halifax, one of nature's gentlemen though of modest origin, is a ' haverer ' of the direst kind. The book is meant as a protest against caste-snobbery, and is a singular display of the same snobbery, inverted. If nature can manage no better with her gentlemen, we much prefer that sophisticated product, Major Pendennis. The vogue of this work may be considered as an index of middle class Victorian taste.

It is singular in how many tones, complacent or sententious, defiant or grotesque, the novel takes up its parable against those conventions, which must have been, unless they are grossly misdescribed, ' heavy as frost, and deep almost as life.' And the stir of the rebellious, or antinomian, spirit produces the strangest clashes. The din raised in certain quarters against

Jane Eyre will be remembered ; yet in one way it is the most edifying of tales, with its display of the successful struggle in the soul of the heroine between nature and Puritanism, or, if we will, between passion and legality. But what the critics of Charlotte Brontë could not forgive was that there should *be* authentic passion, that there should be nature ; the mere triumph of virtue, and its ultimate reward, would not content them. All this shows what a deadweight had to be lifted before any freedom of treatment could be secured. Inferior talent, willing enough to be antinomian, could only produce an immense demonstration of the sham commodity, of *bogus* passion. This is evident in such a book as Lawrence's *Guy Livingstone ; or, Thorough* (1857), which is chiefly of interest as a foil to, or counterfeit of, the work of genius, and which is disposed of sufficiently in Bret Harte's parody, *Guy Heavystone* ; wherein the hero ' carelessly twisted the poker into hard knots with his nervous fingers.' The original Guy is a degenerate scion of the Byronic personage who is so well described by Macaulay, and whose ancestry is to be found in the ' novel of terror ' ; but, in addition, he is full of the cheapest infantile-insolent ' public school spirit ' of the time, with its muscle-worship and crude sportsmanship. And there is a garnishing of classical tags and allusions, designed to throw a Hellenic glamour round the leading blackguard. Yet for all this Lawrence possessed, and might have worked, a vein of talent, and a spring of wild energy; and the reader regrets that he chose the path of folly.

And he regrets it still more when he turns the pages of ' Ouida,' or Louise de la Ramée (1839-1908), who furnished lawful fun for many a smart reviewer and parodist in her day. They mocked at her small Latin and less Greek, which nothing could keep her from airing and misquoting ; at her would-be voluptuous ' interiors ' and over-furnished luxury ; at her superbly-endowed heroes and rascals, who were often the same person ; and at her tawny, full-bodied, but unluckily often adulterated English. *Tricotrin*, *Folle-Farine*, *Puck*, were among her most popular tales ; the scene was often foreign—Italian or French—and such a setting was rarer in our fiction than it has since become. ' Ouida's ' audience, I imagine, was found not so much in the kitchen (though she must have stolen into those quarters now and then) as on the seaside bench, or on the private shelf of the *bourgeoise*, or perhaps in the innocent parsonage, where she was carefully hidden away from, or forbidden to, the young ladies and their younger brothers—hidden and forbidden in vain ! Mamma might peruse ' these

things,' in order to be sure of the worst. The worst, however, is not alarming, and 'Ouida' cannot have done much harm. The magnificent Tricotrin, wanderer, violinist, mob-orator, and rescuer of infants who grow up to be ungrateful beauties of high rank, is not deleterious. The innocent reader's head was filled, no doubt, with preposterous pictures of the world. But 'Ouida' has a redeeming quality of heart, and some dexterity of hand. *A Dog of Flanders*, one of her best short pieces, is marred by an excess of the 'pathetic fallacy,' when the dog in question, upon his master entering a cathedral,

could not understand, but he was *full of sorrow and of pity for the* art-passion that to him was so incomprehensible *and yet so sacred.*

Yet the pathos of this story, and also of *A Leaf in the Storm*, is real, and the conduct is skilful. 'Ouida,' if she did not know her world, did know her landscape, though she could not observe the modesty of nature in describing it. Her love of things seen and her humanity are not to be denied.

CHAPTER XXV

GEORGE MEREDITH

I

MEREDITH [1] (1828-1909) has been gone only eleven years, and he wrote on to the last. He began to write in the year before the issue (1850) of *Copperfield*; his career includes the whole literary life of George Eliot, not to speak of Robert Louis Stevenson; he had been twenty years at work before he sponsored the first stories of Mr. Hardy, and he was alive when *The Dynasts* was published; and, outlasting thus many fashions and schools, and owing little debt to any, and in turn affecting few, he ran his own long course and remained himself. He was always saluted by the discerning; but for nearly thirty years they were a small band, and those lean years he never forgot. Late in the Seventies the circle widened, and Meredith became of note. Before the end he had considerable insular and American fame, and some recognition abroad. His status as a writer and artist is still disputed, and the balance will not soon be struck. The public was outstripped by the reach and novelty of his vision, and still more by his swift strange pen. We have not yet settled down from the fight that his admirers had to make for the acknowledgement of his power. The old criticisms of his form are mostly true, but there is still the question to be decided, how much they matter. His work is always provoking, and always surviving, a fresh revulsion of taste.

The outer and even the inner chronicle of Meredith are becoming better known, now that his letters are published; and, despite a certain strain of asperity that is disclosed, they do no wrong to the expectation of profound and noble character aroused by his writings, and they throw new light on the writings themselves. His long early struggle as a man of letters was troubled by his unsuccessful first marriage—a calamity reflected in his verse. His sojourns in Germany, France, and Italy leave their mark on his novels. The Southern English scenery, and especially that of Surrey, where he lived most of his life, appears, with its gentle qualities

mystically exalted, in his verse and prose. The happiness of his second home, and the grief of the widower, experienced amid the same surroundings, also find record in his letters and poetry. His books contain by the way much argument and pleading on the political and social themes—the national policy, the temper of the English caste, the claim of women for opportunity —about which he wrote to his friends ; and he shared, we find, with some of his intimates the agnostic and severe, yet stoical and even hopeful spirit, which we have met with so frequently in the course of this review. But to say this is merely to mark a few points of the compass ; the full and rounded biography is still to come ; and here can be sketched only Meredith's contribution to letters.

II

Meredith published verse during sixty years ; *Chillianwallah* appeared in 1849, *Milton* in 1908. His poetry thus forms a brief prelude, a running accompaniment, and an epilogue of some length, to his work in prose, and may be noticed first. The youthful *Poems* of 1851, though praised by Charles Kingsley and William Michael Rossetti, were hardly remarked. They have not much character, and Meredith himself came to slight them ; but they include the first version of *Love in the Valley*, which sang in the ears of Tennyson, and also the promise of a natural style and simple music which were too often to be obscured. There are good rhymes in *The Shaving of Shagpat* (1856), and also in *Farina* (1857), studding the prose. The touch of doggerel and impromptu is all in keeping, and also quickens those admirable pieces, *Juggling Jerry* and *The Old Chartist*, which appeared in the volume of 1862 entitled *Modern Love, and Poems of the English Roadside, with Poems and Ballads*. *Modern Love*, suggested by personal suffering, is Meredith's one great and successful poem of considerable length ; it was received coolly except by the few. Many years passed ; he wrote a number of verses in periodicals, and these and more he gathered up in *Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth* (1883). His choice of forms and subjects now became more evident. There are classical pieces, 'Hellenics' in lyric shape, like *Melampus* ; mystical poems of nature, forecasting his peculiar natural religion, like *The Woods of Westermain* ; and social or ethical poems in a metaphysical style, like *A Ballad of Fair Ladies in Revolt*, which elucidate the ruling ideas of the novels.

One ode, noble in conception and full of poetic ore, *France, December 1870*, had been published in 1871, and was reprinted in the volume of 1887 called *Ballads and Poems of Tragic Life*. Here most of the themes are heroic and historic, or legendary; *The Song of Theodolinda*, *The Nuptials of Attila*; and the lyre is smitten hard, sometimes thrashed, so vehement and sonorous are the tunes. There are more Hellenics, of which *Phaéthôn* is the most splendid. Doggerel, deliberate and defiant, figures afresh in work like *Archduchess Anne*; it is strangely fused with passion, but the result is not poetry. Already Meredith's own life had become tragic, through the loss in 1885 of his second wife. But most of the personal and intimate poems, where the inner struggle between grief and renewed faith is sometimes reflected in the difficulties of the form, were reserved for the volume of 1888, *A Reading of Earth*. Chief amongst them is *A Faith on Trial*, Meredith's greatest contribution to sacred and exalted verse, in which his lay creed is fully set forth. It is worthily accompanied by *Hard Weather*, *The Thrush in February*, and the *Hymn to Colour*. But the *Dirge in Woods* is pure and perfect song, like something in Goethe. The *Poems* of 1892 mostly answer in style to the more wilful of Meredith's novels. *The Empty Purse* and the ode *To the Comic Spirit* are jungle, not without overgrown and buried treasure. But the treasures are intellectual, and concern the student of ideas, not the lover of poetry. One composition, *Jump-to-Glory Jane*, an astonishing sort of Salvation Army 'Bab Ballad,' refreshes us by the way. But the *Night of Frost in May* is there also, to show the stars through the jungle-roof, and *Breath of the Briar* is there for perfume.

In 1898 came the *Odes in Contribution to the Song of French History*, containing the reprinted *France, 1870*, and three new pieces of the same type, *The Revolution*, *Napoléon*, and *Alsace-Lorraine*; all magnificent in grasp, in temper, and in hopefulness, none of them without what Carlyle terms 'islets of the blest and the intelligible'; but all, for the rest, only half-shapen, or less than half-shapen, into form. The fate of such work is prophesied, not by your enthusiasm or by my cavils, but by the whole history of art. Meredith went on to the end writing poems, mostly shorter and safer things, sometimes hitting, oftener missing; the misses do not matter. *A Reading of Life* (1901) shows the same interests, the same unbowed spirit, the same freshness of eye and sense, as of old, and the same invincible queerness of utterance; but lo, suddenly, for

eight lines, the queerness vanishes, and we have a *Song in the Songless* :

> They have no song, the sedges dry,
> And still they sing.
> It is within my breast they sing,
> As I pass by.
> Within my breast they touch a string,
> They wake a sigh.
> There is but sound of sedges dry:
> In me they sing.

What poet would not wish to have signed that ? And later yet, written within a year of his death, when he was eighty-one, there is Meredith's finale to his lines on Milton, which were recited at the tercentenary celebration. In these verses of his age the style, good or otherwise, is unchanged ; the tide of life and thought is unabated ; the topics too are much the same ; but there is an increased emphasis on public names and affairs : Garibaldi, Russia, Nelson, Ireland.

III

The verse of Meredith, like that of every poet, may be read from three points of view, which though connected are still distinct. First of all, along with his letters and many a side-light from his novels, it is the diary of his inner biography, which no one yet has tried to write. The stories, ballads, and dramatic monologues, though remarkable, form the smaller part of his poetry ; the greater part of it, whether lyrical, reflective, confessional, or didactic, is about himself and is written in the first person. The home landscape, the salutation of Nature to his mind and sense, the ' faith on trial ' which he built up out of it, his vision of nature and his experience of loss, his characteristic ideas about life and death and continuance, are all recorded more directly in his verse than in his prose, if not always so happily. In verse he touches on the two crises in the history of his affections ; in verse he gives loudest utterance to his political faith and his patriot sympathies. All this matter recurs in his prose, dramatically in the novels, sociably in the letters ; but for the true, the solitary Meredith we go to his verse. ' Nature is my God,' he wrote in his old age, ' and I trust in her. . . . Even if no one comes I never feel lonely. I have my books and my own thoughts . . . my religion of life is always to be cheerful.' Simple words, but with a long history behind them, to which the poems give the principal clue.

With that history in mind, the poems may be studied, secondly, by the philosopher or theologian, as a contribution to thought. They not only deserve but challenge such treatment. Meredith's creed and argument, his view of nature and conduct, of the scale of virtues, of the chief good, of the 'last things,' and of the consolations which can be approved by reason, can be stated in fairly positive terms. The artistic expression is often imperfect and obscure, and much close interpreting is wanted; yet again, in many places where he is not poetical, and *because* he is not poetical but runs to formula, he is all the clearer. Meredith's ideas, like Browning's, have often been carefully expounded. I will not try to add to that literature, but will only note one or two aspects of them.

(1) He is of his time and circle, he belongs to the *naturalistic* movement. But he is outside any fold. He is not a 'joined member' even of those persuasions with which he has most affinity—Comtist, or philosophic radical, or Spencerian. 'Naturalistic' is the nearest label we can get. He finds no nourishment in the creeds; if he uses any of their sacred terms, *God* or *prayer*, it is in a sense of his own. Moreover, churchcraft and the ecclesiastical element do not figure in his vision of 'certain nobler races, now very dimly imagined.' He does not waste time on attacking, being otherwise occupied. But among his friends were Swinburne, Cotter Morison, and other heretics; and he showed sympathy with many unpopular and aggressive persons like James Thomson and G. W. Foote. With men of science he seems to have consorted less; but his clearness of brain and stoical courage, despite the difference of dialect, often remind us of Huxley. Meredith is one of the foremost in the 'naturalistic' camp; he too is seen endeavouring to frame an exalted lay religion that will work.

(2) He does appropriate, though he puts in his own way, some of the ideas of human development which the new science was making familiar. Man is both an animal and a spirit. He is made up of 'blood,' as the Elizabethans called the appetitive and passionate part; of reason, or 'brain'; and of soul, or vision. The individual, and so the race, is the theatre of a struggle amongst these elements; here too is the 'struggle for life,' but it is waged within the man. It may be a fierce and tragic struggle, with a good or bad ending. It is not simply the fray between 'blood and judgement,' in which one combatant gets the other down and extirpates him. We are not Manicheans who think that the message of sense and passion is diabolical. The primal energies of human nature are the

foundation for the life of the spirit, not in contradiction to it. The lower part has indeed to be kept in leash, but kept alive and trained; we are not to deaden ourselves to 'colour, the soul's bridegroom,' or to the beauty of women, or to athletic pleasures; on the contrary. In all this there is nothing new, and if Meredith had done no more than put it into curious language there would be nothing new about him either.

(3) But there is: there is his whole philosophy of love, in which he finds the chief test, and the chief hope, for both sexes equally, in their upward struggle. He preaches their equality at every point, like his fellow-liberals. But he figures it in terms of life and drama, not as an application of the abstract 'rights of man,' nor yet as an inference of biology. It takes breathing shape in Aminta and Diana. Their love, finally won and granted, implies this equality, and is worth nothing without it. The winning implies a tussle, not only between the sexes, but within each partner; a tussle in many painful rounds, in which even life may be lost. But 'the soul, through blood and tears,' can only so prevail. Meredith's creative and imaginative power varies the application of this fundamental idea with each new story and character.

(4) He also has a *mysticism* of his own, which is seen in his fondness for certain ultimate terms, *the Earth*, *Nature*, which seem to him to wear a peculiar richness of meaning. These half-personified figures are his neo-pagan goddesses, whose cruelty, or stern stepdame's awards, may be wrought into motherly kindness, with reasonable luck, by the human brain and will, if at a sufficient stretch and if properly obedient to the law of the deities. Their presence is not always good for the poetry; but it broods over many of Meredith's most deeply felt and studied verses. Thus the philosopher and historian of mental currents will note Meredith's steady naturalism, and also the personal turn that he gives to it by his reading of the function of love, and by the special complexion of his nature-worship. But this point of view, like that of the biographer, concerns us here less than that of the critic. Meredith's poetry may be judged, after all, as poetry.

IV

The critic, trying to guess in his rude sincere way at the decisions of Time, seeks in poetry first of all, if not last of all, for the virtue of felicity. Meredith spends more wits in shunning felicity than would equip ten ordinary men for attaining to it;

as though he thought ' that nothing of itself will come, but we must still be seeking.' This too is a fault of his prose ; but in his prose there are far larger expanses of happy and unsought expression than in his verse. He reminds us of the school of Donne ; few of his poems, however brief, are quite successful all through ; and he fails for the same reason as Vaughan fails, or Crashaw. Some demon drives him, in his dealings with language, to give an extra turn to the screw, and to break the screw. Or rather, the genius of English resists, and breaks *him* ; it is an invisible, invincible adversary ! Well, if Meredith had spent in conforming to the laws of style some of the energy which he spends on bidding us conform to the laws of Earth. The business of the critic is to seek for the blessed exceptions to this perverse habit of a great man. Happily they are very many. It would be idle to play, like the older reviewers in years past, the devil's advocate, and to fill many pages with painful examples, as Johnson did in his *Life of Cowley*. The main species of Meredith's poetry are clearly marked, and each has its peculiar excellence.

The name of ' heroic verse ' may conveniently be taken for a body of his writing which varies much in date and style and topic, but agrees throughout both in its masculinity of temper and in being inspired by historical traditions, or by public events, rather than by the writer's private experience. Here, as ever, he depends little on other poets, and leaves them little for imitation. His approach to his subject is always original, whatever he may make of it. He has a music of his own in his brain, whether or no he can get it out. His ballads and lays are not in the fashion of the time, or of his friends ; except perhaps once, in *The Young Princess*, where he seems to owe something to the author of *Sister Helen* and *Rose Mary*. The youthful composition *Margaret's Bridal Eve*, with its interlined burden, is much more of a *pastiche*. The very spirited and ringing *Head of Bran*, also of early date, recalls the ditties of Thomas Love Peacock, the father of the first Mrs. Meredith, and would have been well worthy of him. But these debts or likenesses are only casual. In *The Nuptials of Attila* there is a new tune, fierce, rapid, and insurgent, which sweeps us over all the rugged places to a crashing close :

> Death to them who call him dead !
> Death to them who doubt the tale !
> Choking in his dusty veil
> Sank the sun on his death-bed.
> Make the bed for Attila !

There is the same blacksmith's energy in the music of *The Song of Theodolinda*, where the story is for once taken from Christian legend. The queen, in an ecstasy of penitential devotion, presses to her bosom the nail of the true Cross, heated red-hot, white-hot; on these words the changes are rung in the refrain:

> In their heaven the sainted hosts,
> Robed in violet unflecked,
> Gaze on humankind as ghosts:
> I draw down a ray direct.
> Red of heat, across my brow,
> White of heat, I touch Him now.

The rough curt phraseology is here in keeping; it would be hard to find an intenser expression of rapturous pain; you can hear the iron touch the flesh. But these 'ballads and poems of tragic life' also include some of the Hellenics, which form a small class apart and have a stamp of their own.

Meredith's poems on Greek legendary subjects do not recall the blank verse monologues of Tennyson or of Lord de Tabley, or the preludes of Browning to his 'transcripts.' They are mostly lyrical; they are charged with imagery, with the life of Pan, with the sights and scents and sounds of the swarming earth; and several of them are distinguished, above all, by freshness of metrical invention, by an emphatic mastery of novel tunes. The most daring experiment is in *Phaéthôn*, where the galliambic measure of Catullus, already adapted by Tennyson in his *Boadicea*, is again courageously transplanted:

> Doúble-vísaged stánd the moúntains | ìn impérial áltitùdes,
> Ànd with shádows dáppled mén sìng | tò him, Háil, O Benéficènt!

It is, as Meredith observes, almost unattainable in English; and the measure of *Phœbus with Admetus*, which seems to be original, is more successful, and expresses amazingly well the dance and gaiety of natural things as they hear the tunes of Apollo—of which this, in truth, is one:

> Mány | swàrms of | wíld bèes || descénded òn our fiélds:
> Státely stòod the béanstàlk || with heád bént hígh:
> Bíg of heàrt we láboured || at stóring míghty yíelds,
> Woól and còrn, and clústers || to máke mén crý!

Here, and in *Melampus*, the most felicitous of all these mythic poems, it must be admitted that the expression is often rough, and is carried off by the cunning and imperious tune, and by the poet's intense Keats-like intimacy with the earth. Melampus

the physician, who knows the language of the creatures, is George Meredith :

> Melampus touched at his ears, felt finger on wrist :
> He was not dreaming, he sensibly felt and heard.
> Above, through leaves, where the tree-twigs thick intertwist,
> He spied the birds and the bill of the speaking bird.
> His cushion mosses in shades of various green,
> The lumped, the antlered, he pressed, while the sunny snake
> Slipped under : draughts he had drunk of clear Hippocrene,
> It seemed, and sat with a gift of the Gods awake.

The same may be said of a longer piece, *The Day of the Daughter of Hades*, written in a rushing short-lined measure ; Callistes is loved awhile by Persephone's daughter, ' Skiageneia,' in her sojourn on earth, and departs chanting, somewhat like Browning's David,

> that song
> Of the sowing and reaping, and cheer
> Of the husbandman's heart made strong
> Through droughts and deluging rains
> With his faith in the Great Mother's love . . .

The swift and richly-coloured dissolving views ; the minute and affectionate observation of the ' snub kids,' the ' shade-loved white wind-flower,' the ' asphodel woodsides ' ; and also the symbolism, never overdone but never far away, all make this poem signal amongst its fellows.

The odes [1] on French history from another section of Meredith's heroic verse. They are in a natural sequence ; and the opening piece, *The Revolution*, may be briefly summed, as an example of the true force of imaginative thought underlying the lofty, though strained and over-compacted style.

Before 1789 France lay under the weight of the old order,—

> Beneath a hoar-frost's brilliant crust ;
> Whereon the jewelled flies that drained
> Her breasts disported in a glistering spray.

Suddenly, triumphantly, she raises a wedding-song or shout of ' Liberty ! ' to her first lord, the heavenly Angel of her fate. He claims her as his bride ; the ' freedom of the natural soul ' is now asserted. But the sight of her wrongers poisons her happy ardour with a desire, half-righteous and half-perverted, for revenge ; and so she now becomes the mistress of a nether demon, and pursues her old oppressors with bloody reprisals. This, again, by a natural law, awakens the thirst in her to become herself an oppressor ; a crime that can only end in her

building up the throne of a new, a third master for herself. The Angel from above watches France lying under the hand of Napoleon ; pities her, becomes her friend again, but also her purgatorial judge, who is to ' divide the martyred creature from her crimes.' These include not only her cruelties, but her ' pleasures ' and lusts. So France must be scourged in her upward course of redemption. The earthly instrument is Napoleon ; and she is to learn,

> closing Anarch's reign,
> That she had been in travail of a Man.

The workmanship of this and the following odes is jagged enough and to spare, but the rhythm once more bears down many an impediment. *Alsace-Lorraine*, one of the plainest of the four, clears up at last into a lofty peroration : ' Our Europe,' it ends,

> From answering Rhine in grand accord,
> From Neva beneath Northern cloud,
> And from our Transatlantic Europe loud,
> Will hail the rare example for their theme ;
> Give response, as rich foliage to the breeze ;
> In their entrusted nursling know them one :
> Like a brave vessel under press of steam,
> Abreast the winds and tides, on angry seas,
> Plucked by the heavens forlorn of present sun,
> Will drive through darkness, and, with faith supreme,
> Have sight of haven and the crowded quays.

This was printed in 1898—a prophetic view of some visions, if not of the facts, of 1920. Meredith, it may be added, apprehended sharply, if not the general cataclysm of the war, at any rate an invasion of an unprepared England, gallantly but vainly resisting. In *Il y a Cent Ans*, and in some of his interviews with journalists, this forecast is more than hinted. His poems on Nelson (*October 21, 1905*, and *Trafalgar Day*) are conceived in the spirit which animates *Beauchamp's Career*. Mr. Hardy's *Dynasts* covers some of the ground of Meredith's odes in a lofty, lucid, and panoramic style ; and in the condensed, difficult manner of the choric parts there is a further likeness.

One aspect of the novels, and a very essential one, is represented in Meredith's colloquial verses ' of the roadside,' such as *The Old Chartist*, *Juggling Jerry*, and *Martin's Puzzle*. Farmer Blaize, and old Gammon, and various tinkers and postillions, speak their prose in rustic voices, and the figures of Kiomi the gypsy and her companions live in our memory. They have

the air of being transcripts from observation. Jerry and the Chartist, however, are endowed with an irony and a fancy that belong to the poet: 'Nature allows us to bait for the fool'; 'the Lord must have his lease'; the arch-juggler will soon juggle old Jerry away from his old girl. The style is not unlike Browning's—but it is a tramping, open-air Browning of the English highways. The old Chartist's vision of a better earth is one of Meredith's humorous triumphs :—

> For human creatures all are in a coil;
> All may want pardon.
> I see a day when every pot will boil
> Harmonious in one great Tea-Garden!

This kind of flung-off verse is an agreeable feature of Meredith's letters, especially those addressed to his friend Hardman; it is the blossom of many a Surrey day of wandering, bantering, and feasting. The fraternity of the 'Sunday Tramps,' under the auspices of Leslie Stephen, included Meredith; he was, by all the records, a great companion, when he was not musing in the woods of Westermain; he blew forth homely and chaffing verses naturally, like rings from a pipe of tobacco, and often they hit the mark more easily than his ambitious works of art. It is time, however, to touch on his confidential poetry of the graver sort.

V

Modern Love [1] consists of fifty poems, each of sixteen lines, and each in the same metre of four independent quatrains in closed rhyme (*abba*, etc.). In the time of Fulke Greville and Chapman they would have been called sonnets without objection; and, like Shakespeare's sonnets, they relate an obscure but profound and painful love-story, and fall into smaller groups or sequences, many of the numbers having the value of independent and separate poems. Both series, moreover, are 'metaphysical' in the proper sense of the word: that is, they often rise up and away beyond the actual theme into meditations upon life and death, parting and temptation, bodily beauty and spiritual pain. In both, finally, the actual story is implied, not really told; and while Shakespeare's story is still debated, Meredith's story can be made out, though not easily. It is suggested, but no more, by his own bitter experience; yet is in this way peculiar, that until the very end, when the imaginary wife takes the opiate poison, nothing at all, in the hard mundane sense, ever demonstrably happens. She has a shadowy,

would-be lover; the husband, in pique or despair, turns to another woman, less shadowy; but neither spouse is in act false. Or so we suppose; for of the lady the author says in a letter: 'her husband never accurately knew, therefore we ought not to inquire.' The drama lies in their shifting relationship under these conditions; and it is drawn with an affluence of lacerating images, which could not have been heightened had both of them broken their vows. But then this feature is the strength of the poem, and not a weakness. The bitter play is all the bitterer for being played, almost to the end, only in the chambers of the brain and blood of 'this diverse pair.' It can only be demurred that the last catastrophe, coming as it does with so terrific an abruptness, is barely explained by the character of the wife, as she is represented.

Modern Love is not so hard to construe as it seems—not nearly so hard as Shakespeare's sonnets; of which it once more fairly reminds us by its mighty single phrases and flashes, and by the passages of acrid irony, savagely descending into triviality, that mark the pause and ebb of a passion bent upon exhausting itself. There is also a pervading colloquial quaintness, another form of bitterness, which is less conspicuous in Shakespeare's confession; and there are not, of course, the sustained immortal harmonies of the greater poet. But there are more desperate and successful ventures in language than can be found in almost any English composition of the same length:

> The dread that my old love may be alive,
> Has seized my nursling new love by the throat.

Or:

> then, as midnight makes
> Her giant heart of Memory and Tears
> Drink the pale drug of silence, and so beat
> Sleep's heavy measure, they from head to feet
> Were moveless. . .

And there is many a line of pure beauty, in the traditional great style:

> When she wakes,
> She looks the star that thro' the cedar shakes . . .

Or:

> With slow foot,
> The low rosed moon, the face of Music mute,
> Begins among her silent bars to climb.

Or:

> Love that had robbed us of immortal things,
> This little moment mercifully gave.

The poem in which these last lines occur (No. xlvii., 'We saw

the swallows gathering in the sky ') is perhaps the most perfect and musical of the fifty ; the opening number (' By this he knew she wept with waking eyes ') is not excelled in tragic energy or in daring but warranted coinage of phrase by any of its successors ; while No. xxxix. (' She yields ') is the most dramatic of all, as an utterance of swift and overpowering revulsion : the speaker, in the moment of his acceptance by the ' golden-crowned ' lady to whom he flies for solace, suddenly seeing his wife hand-in-hand with *her* lover :

> A man is one : the woman bears my name,
> And honour. Their hands touch ! Am I still tame ?
> God, what a dancing spectre seems the moon !

It would not be well to deny that *Modern Love*, like some of Meredith's other narratives in verse, has certain dangerous affinities with the ' spasmodic ' poetry of Alexander Smith, Dobell, and other writers already noted (Ch. xviii.) who are not far removed in date, and who often defeat themselves, making passion grotesque by overstrain of language. Meredith is sometimes on the brink of doing so ; and so, to be honest, is Shakespeare too ; Hamlet and Troilus are now and then ridiculous ; but again, both poets continually save themselves, because the grotesqueness is a part of the irony :

> With commonplace I freeze her, tongue and sense.
> Niagara or Vesuvius is deferred.

The tormented husband punishes himself with his own epigrams, and even with a little vulgarity, as an outlet for his bitterness ; when ' Madam,' his wife, and ' my Lady,' her rival, meet and in a ' gracious interview,' he marks the ' glazed and inaccessible eye ' of the one, and the nose, ' not fashioned aptly,' of the other. This is human nature, and the scene of a novel compressed into sixteen lines of rhyme. It is, moreover, a relief from the spasmodic touches :

> 'Twould calm me could I clasp
> Shrieking Bacchantes with their souls of wine !

Thus into these eight hundred lines there are crowded half a dozen different and discordant styles, which express the discords of the story.

Meredith's poems of the Southern English landscape breathe of an intense and solitary pleasure, which in the end becomes a source of sure though severe consolation and the foundation of his ' faith on trial.' Some of them, like *The Lark Ascending*, begin with pure unmoralised description ; very few of them

are nothing more than that; there is little pure, distinct, disinterested Constable painting; there is always an application; a genuine Englishman, Meredith insists on being taught, and on teaching. In *Love in the Valley*, which he lengthened and much improved, he is for once content with the loveliness of the subject, and so triumphs. Usually he teaches, and he teaches well and nobly, and often poetically too; but he seldom for long avoids oddnesses, knots, and unnatural turns of language while doing so. *The Woods of Westermain* has a magical tune, and opens in perfect fashion, but runs off into pregnant, contorted, abstract sentences which flatly refuse to be read aloud. In *Hard Weather* and *The Thrush in February* there is the same admixture; some of the sentences, which embody the poet's 'reading of earth,' are hammered, with Vulcanic efforts, into better shape, and stick in the memory:

> Behold the life at ease; it drifts.
> The sharpened life commands its course.
> She winnows, winnows roughly; sifts,
> To dip her chosen in her source.
> Contention is the vital force.

Rhymed ethics rather than poetry, this kind of writing abounds in Meredith, and we must not be ungrateful. In *A Faith on Trial* the nobility and depth of the feeling fuses the intractable matter into art again and again; and there are many passages of pure delightfulness, like that on the wild-cherry tree, which had figured already, not less happily, in the prose of *The Egoist*:

> My Goddess, the chaste, not chill;
> Choir over choir white-robed;
> White-bosomed fold within fold.

The shorter and less ambitious pieces, like the beautiful *Change in Recurrence*, are often the most finished. One of the latest of all, *Youth in Age* (1908), has a rare Swinburnian cadence, and perfectly expresses the unquenchable youth of the writer's own spirit:

> Once I was part of the music I heard
> On the boughs or sweet 'neath earth and sky,
> For joy of the beating of wings on high
> My heart shot into the breast of the bird.
>
> I hear it now and I see it fly,
> And a life in wrinkles again is stirred,
> My heart shoots into the breast of the bird,
> As it will for sheer love till the last long sigh.

Many of Meredith's poems fall outside any of these classes; but all disclose much the same qualities and hindrances. One

of the most intricate in argument and gnarled in language, *The Sage Enamoured*[1] *and the Honest Lady* (1892), describes a mental drama which might have gone better into prose, seeing that the chains of verse only embarrass the recital; it contains some of the author's ripest instruction. He also liked the sonnet-form, of the severer, Miltonic model; and there are thoughts and images of his best and happiest sort in *The Spirit of Shakespeare*, *Lucifer in Starlight*, and *Grace and Love*. As might be expected, any flaws of oddness, or strained transition, or elliptical grammar, come out plainest in this, the most exacting and merciless of all poetic species except the briefer sort of song; and none of Meredith's sonnets attain formal perfection. *Appreciation* is one of those that approach it nearest; it is of great beauty, and is also in the great tradition. The speaker, a man somewhat worn, comes to life again at the approach of the fair soul, and repays the gift by quickening it into new colours, though he does not claim the ownership of it:

> Earth was not Earth before her sons appeared,
> Nor Beauty Beauty ere young Love was born:
> And thou when I lay hidden wast as morn
> At city-windows, touching eyelids bleared;
> To none by her fresh wingedness endeared;
> Unwelcome unto revellers outworn.
> I the last echoes of Diana's horn
> In woodland heard, and saw thee come, and cheered.
> No longer wast thou then mere light, fair soul!
> And more than simple duty moved thy feet.
> New colours rose in thee, from fear, from shame,
> From hope, effused: though not less pure a scroll
> May men read on the heart I taught to beat:
> That change in thee, if not thyself, I claim.

VI

Meredith began his long course of story-telling with a *pastiche*, the 'Arabian entertainment' called *The Shaving of Shagpat* (1856), one of the most harmonious things he ever wrote. George Eliot justly greeted it as 'a work of genius, and of poetical genius'; indeed it is more poetical than much of the author's poetry. The story is original, but the diction of the *Thousand and One Nights* is echoed, and their fantasy and uproar are reproduced, and there is a curious felicity in the coinage of the Eastern names, *Rabesqurat*, *Goorelka*, *Karaz*. But the fabricated style does not hide the young intensity of passion that reigns in the story of Bhanavar and elsewhere. There is no allegory properly speaking, as some have main-

tained, and there is no moral; but the moralist is in the neighbourhood. The history of the barber Shibli Bagarag, who after many magical adventures, multiplied by his own faint-heartedness or folly, achieves the shaving of Shagpat, and the severing of the 'Identical,' the enchanted hair by which whole cities are held in bondage, is an ordeal for Shibli Bagarag. All Meredith's stories describe an ordeal, and in his eyes life itself is mostly an ordeal, a test to show whether or no a man shall become the 'master of the event.' In *Shagpat* this notion is wrapped up in rainbow colours and in irony; but it is not the Voltairian irony of Beckford's *Vathek*, the only other great Eastern story from an English hand. It is at bottom the irony of the relentless moralist, though mixed up with endless irresponsible drollery. There is an element of parody also in *Farina, A Legend of Cologne* (1857), a much cruder work, a pseudo-German romance of fighting, abductions, water-sprites, and interviews with the devil. Some of it is mockingly, but some of it is honestly, sentimental.

Meredith poured all the new, unkept wine of his genius into *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel, a History of Father and Son* (1859), an unequal, irritating book which contains some of his freshest and greatest passages. The first meeting and the last parting of Richard and Lucy are told in the classic prose which the author was too often afterwards to think not sufficiently expressive. When he uses it, he touches the springs of joy, and those of pity, with the hand of a master. The narrative of Richard's walk through the forest on hearing the news that he has a child is of the same quality. So is the diary of Clare Doria Forey. All the boyish comedy is first-rate, and is unlike that of Dickens or of any other writer. The wit of the book, as distinct from its humour, is less happy, and the aphoristic parts are tedious; and the 'system'[1] of education practised by Richard's father is not really in organic relation with the story, since it does not provoke the catastrophe, and is not tested by the result. The weakness of the book is in the story. People have complained that the final distraction and death of Lucy Feverel are altogether too piteous; but the true objection seems to be that we do not feel the tragedy to have been inevitable. It follows from a train of unlikely events,[2] which are themselves determined by an unreal gang of persons —failures and shadows, whom we cannot think of as procuring disaster to two noble, and vividly actual, creatures like Richard and Lucy. In the scene, too, where Richard falls to the wiles of the suborned enchantress Bella, there is a sad waste of power.

But we glide over these passages, and come back to Wilming Weir, and to the admirable and natural Mrs. Berry, and to Farmer Blaize, and give thanks. This extraordinary book found no second edition for nineteen years. It should be read in the first as well as in the final version. The author cut and revised [1] it severely, and often to its advantage ; but he brought himself to sacrifice many good things, including drolleries like the sketch of Mrs. Caroline Grandison, 'said to be a legitimate descendant of the great Sir Charles.' 'Woolly negroes blessed her name, and whiskered John Thomases deplored her weight' —a subject for Du Maurier, who was afterwards to illustrate *The Adventures of Harry Richmond*. But it was Millais who supplied the stately drawing to the lines published in *Once a Week*, in 1859, and called *The Crown of Love*. To win his princess, the lover carries her in his arms to the mountain-top ; he dies of the effort, and she with him.

> —Oh death-white mouth ! O cast me down !
> Thou diest ? Then with thee I die.
> —See'st thou the angels with their Crown ?
> We twain have reached the sky.

This poem accords well with the spirit of the story of Feverel ; but it also gives us another point of contact between the youthful genius of Meredith and that of the poets and painters who had been his companions. It is founded on an old story, and it recovers that mediæval blending of mortal and heavenly passion which we call Romance.

It was Charles Keene who made the drawings in *Once a Week* for *Evan Harrington ; or, He would Be a Gentleman* (1860) ; and we must try to forgive him for making Rose Jocelyn ugly ; for the stiff British faces in the village church and the drinking-party, and the sketch of the postillion, duly prepare us for the popular and middle-class humours to which Meredith now turned after the exhausting task of *Feverel*. For the true hero of the tale, who is already defunct when it opens, the 'great Mel,' the buck-tailor, he drew on family memories ; Mel is Meredith's paternal grandfather, the Portsmouth outfitter ; and his grandmother becomes in the story the mother of Evan. Her portrait is solidly and thriftily painted, without any waste of wit. Evan, who has to enter the shop in order to pay off his father's debts, has seen some good society, and is ashamed of his tailorhood ; in the end he is ashamed of being thus ashamed. That is really all ; that is *his* 'ordeal.' The idea is a good one, but is beaten out, through two volumes, into mere leaf. Most of the comic shame, terror, and embarrassment is

supplied by Evan's sisters, the Countess de Saldar being the foremost. They balance in much agony on the social edge between the bourgeois and the gentry, and they fall on the wrong side. A friend of Meredith's sat for the portrait of one of his bravest and simplest English girls, Rose Jocelyn, who has her own, not very racking, trials. This comparatively straightforward tale was not too hard for the public, and did not scare it, and was rather popular; the broader humours being of the obvious excellent type, and the ancient machinery of the benevolent old gentleman who makes the young people happy being equally acceptable. *Evan Harrington* was revised, apparently twice at least, and minutely. The conversation of Jack Raikes, who furnishes good farce, was cut down unsparingly, and so were some charming love-passages.

Emilia in England (1864), afterwards entitled *Sandra Belloni*, was harder to appreciate. It is not a tragedy, though it comes near to being one; it is comedy, of the satiric and the passionate kinds intermixed, and is shot through with the spirit of beauty, the love of country, and the enthusiasm for art. The art is that of music, and the country is Italy. Meredith cared for both; and Emilia, or Sandra, half-Italian, and the owner of one of the great voices of her time and of a soul to match it, is the embodiment of both. The figure of Emilia marks a great flight forward in Meredith's delineative power. The book opens and ends to the sound of her voice ringing in the English woodland; the actual scenery has been identified. She is shown as still immature; but the suggestion of sleeping power and genius in a young girl who is cast among strangers, mostly antipathetic, could not be more powerfully conveyed. She is crossed in love; she is jilted by a weak young English officer, Wilfrid Pole. Much of the book is a satire, with Emilia for contrast, upon the fashion in which the well-bred and well-fed English make love. The more Meredith loved his countrymen and countrywomen, the more he chastened them. An impatience—not unlike that of John Stuart Mill—with British convention, British moral cowardice, British stickiness, is a marked feature of his character; and the Welsh brother and sister in this story, who are drawn with unreserved sympathy, accentuate the trait. So does the Greek *impresario*, Mr. Pericles, a genuine product of the 'comic muse.' The sisters Pole are examples and victims of various forms of sentimentalism, Meredith's great bugbear, which he always exhibits as punishing itself, and as the natural prey of the 'comic spirit.'

In the sequel, *Vittoria* (1866-7), the scene moves to Italy and the Five Days of Milan and the calamity of Novara. Emilia is now Vittoria. Meredith had meanwhile himself visited Italy as a war correspondent and written letters home to the press, capable and vivid enough, but giving no real measure of his absorption in the Italian scene and cause. But this can be seen in the novel, the embroiled plot of which only reflects the turmoil of the events. The picture of Mazzini is as eloquent as Swinburne's, and much more distinct; Vittoria sings her patriot song, the signal for the abortive rising, in La Scala, and her voice is that of ideal Italy. She marries an Italian nobleman who dies in battle; at the end she is left a widow with her young boy, and is a witness of the liberation. She has been tossed in the storm, but never loses courage, dignity, or stature. Meredith has created no nobler figure than Vittoria, Countess Ammiani. The book is distinguished by great salient scenes like the duel in the Stelvio Pass and the song in the theatre, rather than by clearness of conduct or lucidity of form. But the popular passages presenting Barto Rizzo and his fellows are intensely alive. Some of the English figures reappear, including Pole, now serving in the Austrian army, and now a good deal more of a man; but the microscopic study of false sentiment would not have suited this larger canvas, and he falls into the background.

Between the two histories of Emilia came *Rhoda Fleming* (1865), which was written somewhat against the grain. The tragedy of Dahlia Fleming does not hit us so hard as that of Lucy Feverel, in spite of the power expended upon it. Tales of seduction, we know, were common at this date; *Copperfield*, *Ruth*, and *Adam Bede*, each of them striking a different false note, had appeared in the Fifties. Meredith may have vowed that he at least would realise the theme; but the sense of strain is evident. The offender, Edward Blancove, is most skilfully drawn up to a point, being neither lurid, nor merely weak, nor merely wicked, but ordinary. Yet his access of compunction and his change of heart, after he has actually plotted to marry off Dahlia to a paid ruffian, stagger the reader. Dahlia herself is carefully and painfully studied, but her talk in the tragic scenes is forced and unreal. There is some unabashed melodrama. Sedgett, the ruffian, has married Dahlia, and casts her off at the church door. Later he comes to fetch her; but, in the fearless old fashion, his lawful wife appears in the nick of time, and intercepts him. Rhoda, a creature of intense affection and fanatical will, brings some reality into the book wherever she appears.

VII

Meredith must have been less at home with the daughters of the soil than with ladies, and his heroines henceforth are ladies. In *The Adventures of Harry Richmond* (1870-1), which opens a new chapter in his art, the honours are shared between a spirited English damsel, Janet Ilchester [1] (whose character, however, changes somewhat inexplicably in course of the story), and a gracious German princess, Ottilie. There is also Kiomi the gypsy, who is more alive than either of them. The book is said to show the influence of Dickens ; but if so, it is in one disconcerting feature. I mean that it brings into dramatic collision characters of literal, solid, and unmistakeable reality with other creatures, also real in their way, but framed in a pure spirit of humouristic fancy. Squire Beltham, one of Meredith's best old fierce-tongued Anglo-Saxons, clashes in this way with Roy Richmond, the word-spinning, swindling, self-deceiving, superlative adventurer, a Micawber *in excelsis*, a Dumas-like personage made for our entertainment. The course of the story is simply fabulous, and yet amidst it there move a crowd of clear-cut, coated and petticoated, British persons, not at all perturbed. Still, *Harry Richmond* is packed with treasure. The account of Harry's wanderings with Roy, and of the life he lived in the fairyland of Roy's tales and fancies, is pure gold, and worthy of the author of *Copperfield*. Nor is Roy to be forgotten, figuring at Sarkeld as an equestrian statue and coming to life when he perceives his son ; like a grotesque male Hermione. The pious sea-captain Welsh who kidnaps Harry and his friend is not to be faced by cool reason, but provides excellent romance of the Stevensonian kind. To positive life we are brought back by the Squire's last enormous eruption of invective against Roy. The book is a dream and a chaos, and very long ; but no story of Meredith's contains more pure free invention and less preaching.

The close of *Harry Richmond* is in plain classic English ; in *Beauchamp's Career* (1874-5), a few years later, there is some change of manner ; it opens with a portentous flourish of epigram. The much deplored 'style' is not yet at its acme, but begins to usurp more and more. It is ill adapted to express the shades of English political sentiment, which plays a great part in *Beauchamp's Career*. For Meredith, the book is unusually 'topical.' The Crimean war, Bright, the Manchester school, Carlyle, and Ruskin, are all alluded to by the way.

Meredith seems to find a mouthpiece for some of his own political tenets in his shadowy but voluble Radical, Dr. Shrapnel; but he also realises, with more than dramatic sympathy, the mind of the sturdy county Tory. Mr. Everard Romfrey is one of his splendid old English gentlemen. Nevil Beauchamp, a character studied from one of Meredith's friends, springs from the same stock, but is infected, or converted, by the new liberal ideas. Beauchamp is generously and affectionately drawn, a real and solid figure; but his politics interest us less, and are less intelligible, than his affairs of the heart. In strong relief to the more convulsive and sententious style is the sure and delicate analysis of personal feeling. Renée, Marquise de Rouaillout, changeful as a wave, bright and receding as a rainbow, is the most elusive of all Meredith's portraits of women. The English lady, Cecilia Halkett, is wooden by her side. The ending, as in *Richard Feverel*, is sudden and wanton; Beauchamp is drowned in saving a little waif of a boy; but the episode is perfectly told.

The propensity to stretch the principal gentleman of the story on the moral rack, either in comic or a tragic fashion, sometimes goes to extremes. A lady is usually the executioner. In the short tale called *The Case of General Ople and Lady Camper* (1877), the General is a limited and selfish but brave and harmless old person, so deeply wrapped up in himself as to neglect the happiness of his daughter, who is in love with Lady Camper's nephew; and Lady Camper plans the torture. He, the General, courts her; she accepts him; but, though in fact barely forty, she makes him believe that she is seventy (this is extravaganza); she hounds him for his slipshod English; she sends to him by post vicious caricatures of himself; she extorts a dowry for the girl; and she crowns her cruelty by marrying him. Really, the penance exceeds the crime, in this humorous but ill-tempered anecdote. In another short tale of this period, *The House on the Beach*, the fun is of a simpler, more amiable kind.

But *The Tale of Chloe* (1879) is very different handiwork; it is one of Meredith's ineffaceable successes, and makes us wish that he had written more upon the smaller scale. Many novelists had described the humours of Bath. Here it is the Bath of George the Second, as it was under the rule of Beau Nash, who is called in the story Beau Beamish. The dialogue is more like that of Vanbrugh's comedy than that of the older fiction, and there is a streak of poetry besides. Here, for example, is good diction; the words are spoken by the beautiful

rustic who is wedded to the ancient Duke of Dewlap, and who receives many attentions :

'Goodness—yes ! I understand ! I understand everything to-night—men too. . . . They 're not so shamefully wicked, Chloe. Because I can't see the wrong of human nature—if we 're discreet, I mean. *Now and then a country dance and a game, and home to bed and dreams.* There 's no harm in that, I vow.'

The tale of Chloe herself is high tragic romance. Chloe, fair and still young, has beggared herself to save the fortunes of a rascally admirer, Caseldy ; and she settles at Bath, there winning universal respect. Caseldy, now well off, appears on the scene, ostensibly to marry Chloe, but really in sinister pursuit of the Duchess. Chloe sees through him, but she allows herself to enjoy a month of half-real happiness in his presence ; and she is resolved, all the time, to save the Duchess. She carries about her neck a mysterious knotted skein ; it is the symbol and implement of her self-chosen fate. On the night of the elopement she hangs herself by the skein in the very doorway of the Duchess. Meredith does not often elsewhere use the weapon of classic irony, with its double fatal meanings. On one occasion Caseldy urges Chloe to give the skein, as requested, to one of her admirers for a keepsake :

'Speed him on his voyage with the souvenir he asks for.'

'I keep it for a journey of my own, which I may have to take,' said Chloe.

'With me ?'

'You will follow ; you cannot help following me, Caseldy.'

He speculated on her front. She was tenderly smiling.

'I have never known such happiness,' she said. The brilliancy of her eyes confirmed it.

Sir Francis Burnand is said once to have exclaimed to Meredith, 'Damn it, George ! why don't you write as you talk ?' If Meredith had written oftener like this, the question could never have been asked.

VIII

'Whenever the little brain is in doubt, perplexed, undecided which course to adopt, she will come to me, will she not ? I shall always listen,' he resumed soothingly. 'My own ! And I to you when the world vexes me. So we round our completeness. You will know me ; you will know me in good time. I am not a mystery to those to whom I unfold myself.'

Is this an extract from Ibsen's *Nora ?* No, it is from *The*

Egoist, a Comedy in Narrative, which happened to come out in the same year as *Nora*, 1879. The 'comedy in narrative' dilates into volumes, though its action only covers days; and towards the close the action becomes fairly bewildering. The play is packed into three hours, and its story though complex is clear as glass. It is idle to wish that Meredith, who was ever talking of discipline, had undergone that of the theatre. His one dramatic sketch, *The Sentimentalists*, is witty and pleasant, but its aroma would vanish in an auditorium. The method in *The Egoist* is that of Samuel Richardson or of Henry James, in so far as everything takes longer in the telling than in the happening. Every gesture is marked, every thread of motive is split and watched under the lens: not coolly or with an air of science, but excitedly, buoyantly, with a constant spray of wit, analytic epigram, and pointed remark. The success of this method depends on the quality of the wit. And the wit in *The Egoist* is Meredith's usual tantalising mixture of true wit and false; but the brilliant high spirits, the sharp comic situations, the prevailing spirit of youth and courage, the fortunate ending, and the presence of Clara Middleton, carry everything through.

Every one in the book and every reader is glad when Sir Willoughby Patterne, the egoist, loses Clara; but more, I suspect, because Clara is exquisite than because Willoughby is real. He is a good theatrical figure, a most ingenious bundle of selfish attributes. It is sometimes said that he touches us shrewdly, reveals the egoist in ourselves, and makes us feel that we are too like Sir Willoughby. But I doubt if we even feel that other people are too like Sir Willoughby. We cannot so much as feel vindictive towards him. He is on a different level of reality to Clara, or to that favoured and most natural youngster, Crossjay Patterne. Vernon Whitford, the foil to Sir Willoughby, all sterling stuff while the other is all show, was partly sketched from Sir Leslie Stephen. But superficial traits and vivid strokes of life cannot disguise the fact that Vernon too is the embodiment of an abstract conception. He is born to be the Mentor, the moral schoolmaster, and the only worthy husband, of Clara. The witty light-weight Irishman, Colonel De Craye, is much more of an actual man. He would not have steered Clara so well, but he would have been a live, and a more probable, husband. Yet both human nature and poetry abound in the book. There is farce, and high comedy, and lyric prose, and high good sense, and the refreshing conviction that youth must be served. Sir Willoughby tries to

extort from his betrothed a vow of perpetual widowhood should she outlive him. The wild cherry-tree is in bloom over Clara as she watches Vernon Whitford asleep. Crossjay lies under the cushions in the library while the traitor-egoist woos Laetitia Dale. She, in the end, is his wife, but after losing all illusions. Dr. Middleton, Clara's father, the Peacockian Greek scholar, descants on Port. Clara, escorted by De Craye, takes brandy-and-water at an inn. We pass quickly from one of these passages to another and forget the surfeit of aphorism and the tangled connexions of the story.

The Tragic Comedians (1880), a much shorter work, contains all the substance of a tragic play. The error or weakness displayed by the hero, Alvan, and causing the catastrophe, is of the kind approved by the theory of Aristotle and the practice of Shakespeare. It would now be called megalomania ; it is a fatal blindness and self-confidence which leads Alvan to impute his own strength to Clotilde von Rüdiger. Alvan is a Jew, a socialist-republican leader, with advanced opinions and a strange past. Clotilde comes of a conservative noble family, in whose eyes Alvan is accursed. She has spirit and wit, and apparently courage. They have heard of one another, they meet and capture one another. Clotilde is ready to marry Alvan and defy her world. He, in his madness, insists that she shall return to her family and come back to him with their free consent. She does return ; but she is shut up, and bullied, and wrought upon, and lied to, and at last is led to accept her ardent young suitor Marko. Alvan in frenzy sends a letter insulting Clotilde and challenging her father. Marko takes up the challenge and kills Alvan, and then marries Clotilde. Such is the bare story, which is told in a rapid, exalted, lyrical style, grandiosely and violently, but still distinctly. It is not tragi-comedy, but tragedy with a streak of the comic, which is introduced by the infatuate short sight of Alvan.

Alvan was Ferdinand Lassalle, who was killed in duel in 1864 by Yanko von Racowitza, the original of Marko and subsequently the husband of Helene von Dönniges,[1] herself the original for Clotilde. In 1879 she published in German her book *My Relations with Lassalle*, which Meredith read. He follows her version closely, often embodying actual conversation, but noting that Clotilde ' had not spared herself so much as she supposed.' Nor does he spare her ; and yet other evidence points to his having overestimated her. Madame de Racowitza had a long life after a second widowhood, but it went to pieces, and she seems to have been a vain unsound kind of person.

The portrait of Lassalle is remarkable, though it swims before us in something of a mirage, and it is proof of Meredith's catholic imagination, that it could take fire over a German Hebrew. The vulgarity of Alvan, like the rest of him, is on the grand scale. Meredith's interest in things German appears in *Farina*, in *Harry Richmond*, and elsewhere.

The last four novels were much abused for obscurity in plot and language. But *Diana of the Crossways* (1884-5), a book of great beauty, is not too difficult, save in certain passages where the author is pleasantly drunken with his own wit. Perhaps the wit and sallies of Diana herself tend to miss fire ; Meredith said that he had 'had to endow her with brains.' But her great heart and her genius for friendship shine throughout. In exhibiting ' the possibility of a classic friendship between two women,' and in reporting what they say to one another when no one else is present, Meredith's talent is seen at its highest, and his hardness melts. Emma, Lady Dunstane, is an embodiment of clear-eyed affection and loyalty. Sir Lukin, her husband, the average elementary man who is not without heart or compunction, and other minor figures like Sullivan Smith the Irishman and Lord Dannisburgh (who is Lord Melbourne) are drawn without caricature or over-cleverness. From these merits the reader need not be distracted by the most debated episode of the book. Diana betrays a high political secret to Mr. Tonans, the great editor, having heard it from her own lover in confidence.

We need hardly ask whether her action [1] can be pardoned, or extenuated, if we feel that it is out of character. Meredith wrote to a friend that ' she was physically and mentally unaware of the importance of the secret ' ; but this is not made credible in a woman expressly ' endowed with brains.' It is not her weakness, but her blindness, that is unexplained. Perhaps Meredith was the less alive to his difficulty because he believed, when he wrote, that the thing had really happened. The slander was long current in talk, and had passed into history-books, that Mrs. Norton [2] had sold to Delane, of *The Times*, information given her by Sidney Herbert to the effect that Peel was about to bring in a measure of free trade. This tale was unfounded. Lord Aberdeen had himself given the secret to *The Times* for tactical reasons. Lord Dufferin again nailed the falsehood to the counter, and Meredith inserted a note stating that the story of Diana was ' to be read as fiction.' He left it, however, unaltered. At last he makes Diana happy with one of the dullish husbands whom he likes to hold in

reserve. In this novel it is the woman who suffers the 'ordeal.'

Like *The Tragic Comedians*, *One of Our Conquerors* (1890-1) is a study of blindness in the hero, who brings ruin on himself and on those whom he loves. The 'conqueror,' Victor Radnor, a prosperous gentleman, would be happy in his home, but that Nataly, called Mrs. Radnor, has no legal right to the name. There is a lawful wife, a most detrimental person, in the background, who in resentment refuses to divorce Radnor, and persecutes him. Neither the world, nor Nesta, the daughter, know the truth. Radnor, in his fatal way, 'bluffs' the peril; buys a big house, becomes a public man. All the more does exposure pursue him. A train of circumstance, natural in itself, but disguised by the oracular method of narrative, leads to disaster. Nataly dies just before the legal wife dies; too soon, therefore, for Nesta to be legitimated. Radnor goes mad; the girl, after passing through fire, finds a good and understanding husband. The story and style in *One of Our Conquerors* are wantonly complex, and it is so far an impossible book; but it contains wonderful chapters. The obscure sufferings of Nataly, and the ordeal imposed upon Nesta when she learns of the family secret and the brutality of life, are related with a delicacy of vision that might have seemed beyond words, but that the words are there. Meredith has now mastered the instrument which he has invented.

After choking his public with *One of Our Conquerors*, he produced *Lord Ormont and his Aminta* (1894), which is much plainer reading, in spite of an unconvincing plot. Lord Ormont, the famed Indian veteran who has quarrelled with the government, might perfectly well decide, after wedding the youthful Aminta in the embassy at Madrid, to turn his back on English society and keep queer company. It is by no means so clear that he either would or could conceal his marriage from the very world which he despises, and leave Aminta in a cruel false position. His family refuse to believe she is his wife, and his sister, Lady Charlotte Eglett, an admirably drawn lady of quality, is particularly vicious. All this seems quite gratuitous, but without it there would have been no story. Here again Meredith used historic tradition. He took the idea from the chronicle of the Earl of Peterborough, Swift's 'Mordanto,' and the singer Anastasia Robinson; but he changed the time to the nineteenth century (when our ambassador at Madrid could have shown the marriage lines to any inquirer), and modelled Lord Ormont upon the Earl of

Cardigan, of Balaklava note, who actually did marry, in a singular way, in Spain. Naturally Aminta, after many struggles, goes off with a former schoolboy lover, Matthew Weyburn ; and they, besides forming an uncertificated union, set up a school in Switzerland on the highest principles of what is now called co-education. The magnanimous earl lights upon them, gives them a kind of blessing, and then opportunely comes to an end. This, certainly, is the craziest of Meredith's plots ; and it is not plain whether he intended it seriously or facetiously ; but that does not matter. He wrote no more agreeable book. The schoolboy scenes, the drive together, and the swim together, of Matthew and Aminta, and their final escape, form an idyll which the author, this time in a benignant mood, cannot bring himself to destroy ; he confers his blessing and that of Nature on the gallant couple. The presentment of Aminta's unspoken delicacies and perplexities shows no failure of power.

Nor does *The Amazing Marriage*, his last complete novel ; published in 1895, when he was in his sixty-eighth year, it is still young in heart and perception. The plot is tortuous and obscure, but that was nothing new, any more than the endless disquisition and divagation. It may be hard to take much interest in the amazing husband, Lord Fleetwood, who is always cropping up with some new bit of foolish villainy. We are continually wishing that he would go ; and at last he does go, so rumour runs, into a monastery. He is, however, requisite, in order to bring out the quality of his wife, Carinthia Kirby, the amazingly married lady. Carinthia has not exactly charm or beauty, but she is a force of nature, and almost a part of nature. There is life in every word she says and in every scene where she appears, from her first walk in the forest with her brother Chillon down to the final implacable dignity of her repudiation of Fleetwood. The prize-fight, the affray in the gardens, the classic encounter with the mad dog, are all masterpieces of description and narrative, and Carinthia is displayed as a born mother of heroes. Her faithful attendant Madge is worthy of her, and is also a fitting mate for the young vagrant dreamer and poet, Gower Woodseer, who embodies some features of Robert Louis Stevenson.

Nor must one personage be neglected, namely, 'Dame Gossip as Chorus,' a Gampish counterpart to the poet's 'Rumour painted full of tongues.' She opens and finishes the tale. She is the last of Meredith's literary personations ; the first was in *Shagpat*. Her talk is a surprising feat of pure style. Her

eager credulity in accepting report is matched by her imbecile air of caution in sifting it. She is like the messenger or bystander who gives the 'exposition' at the start of a Greek play—reduced to the comic scale. She knows, and knows for certain, more than anybody, and more than the truth; and so she is the fitting chorus to a history where fiction is even stranger than truth, and where so much is left to her imagination, and to the reader's.

In the unfinished *Celt and Saxon*, which began to appear in 1910, Meredith descants once more on one of his favourite racial contrasts: the Celt is here an Irishman, or rather a band of Irishmen; in *Sandra Belloni* he had been Welsh; the Highlander Meredith never seems to have explored. Whether the actual Irishman will recognise himself in the O'Donnell family it is hard to say; perhaps he may open his eyes at the amazing electric flights of fancy depicted in Patrick O'Donnell, who catches fire over the mere image of his brother's unknown, once affianced, and now lost Adiante, who has become the wife of an equally unknown foreign adventurer. The book breaks off before she appears on the scene. It begins well, with the visit of Patrick to the 'Saxon,' the lady's frigid but indignant father, and to his niece Caroline. Afterwards the drawing gets less distinct, and the characters have not time to define themselves. And all through we are faced with Meredith's extraordinary dialogue, in its later shape, where people go on conversing at a headlong rate, and positively appear to comprehend and enjoy each other's words, while the reader cannot; where the author, striking in with his own yet more startling commentary, doubles the enigma; and where, all the time, there gleam out equally wonderful, and much more comforting, flashes of intelligible wit, beauty, and wisdom. What is to be the fate of such writing, it may still be premature to say.

IX

Meredith's stock of bodily vigour separates him from the novelists whose scene is laid indoors and whose capital is mere brain-work. Active, wiry, and enduring, an open-air man, he understands and introduces the hard walker, the climber, the swimmer, the sailor, the boxer, and the duellist. He delights in Carinthia's skill in hitting heads with a stick—an art taught to her by her father, the 'old Buccaneer,' who is said to have been modelled on Edward John Trelawny. Meredith likes to have his favourites in the pink of condition; they must not be

sedentary persons, or 'intellectuals,' but what Morris calls 'children of Adam.' They are quick-blooded and susceptible; they enjoy and suffer and are tempted, intensely; they are not much affected by books, or much troubled with ideas. Feverel, Redworth, Weyburn are not brilliant heroes; but they have 'made England what she is,' and they are men, beyond a doubt. The 'physical basis of life,' as it was then called, is strong within them, and Meredith, amidst all his supersubtle commentary, never forgets it. There is the same Adamic element in Tolstoy and his stories; but then Tolstoy becomes ashamed of it, and falls into a state of Oriental revulsion against it. Yet in one point he is like Meredith; he insists, when reciting the conditions of human happiness, that man must remain in contact with the earth out of which he comes; meaning by this that we should work with our hands and out of doors. Meredith speaks much of communion with his Earth-goddess, but his conception is less simple and more rational than Tolstoy's. Hence his pictures of scenery have the ardour (and sometimes also the dazzling, happy indistinctness) of a lover's; he paints young and happy love itself, in the centre of the picture; and again, his endless detective-work, when he is tracking down shadowy impulse and disavowed motive, is kept sure, and is also kept interesting, by his alert sense of how the blood circulates in the brain.

Like so many of the good intellects of his time, he is preeminently and professionally a moralist. He is a great, admirable, and original moralist, with a vision of his own. Those who dislike this ingredient in his works had better not read them, for it is everywhere. Good and serious volumes, to which I am incompetent to add, have been written upon his ethical teaching. No doubt every describer of life in some sense passes judgement upon conduct. We know pretty well how Shakespeare wishes his audience to feel towards each one of his personages, and about their behaviour; but then he lets the story tell itself. Meredith does not: his plain text is broken and bordered on almost every page with a restless arabesque of commentary, psychological, social, satiric. It is all at bottom *moral* commentary; and it may be hard to follow; but so is the problem in hand—be it the twilight play of purpose in a woman's brain, or the dim awakening of generous youth to the nature of the world. This can no more be told in a blunt positive style than the *x*-rays can be measured by letterweights. Meredith must fairly be said to have invented a new language and notation for his peculiar *morale observatrice.*

And then his morality itself is unlike that of other English novelists. It is not the benevolent morality, jolly or indignant, of Charles Dickens. Meredith can be jolly, but it is in a strenuous, rather intimidating way; and benevolence is not the right word for his charity, which can be great and deep, and even Dantesque, upon due occasion, but which is, after all, somewhat deficient in small change. Also he is too much of a Celt, a wit, and a man of the world to oppress us with the heavy theorising style which George Eliot contracted. Still less does he deal in the large, loose-fitting morality of Fielding, which, sane as it is, seems elementary in some respects, and especially upon the feminine side; but which leaves human nature ample margin. Meredith does not leave much margin; he is tonic, compelling, relentless, rather than winning or amiable. His morality is always in *training*; it is the training of the mountaineer, who knows what a false step means on the ledge of a precipice—he has watched too many disasters—and who carries up with him the memories of 'love in the valley,' but who is most truly himself when his life is depending on his nerve. He likes to think of his heroes as being moral mountaineers too; if they are to deserve their wives, it is well for them to undergo that salutary pastime. It is all wonderfully stimulating; the mountain air is really in these stories. I cannot say whether many readers honestly take Meredith to their hearts; he is very good for the brain and will.

X

But what of him as a novelist? His books are packed with knowledge of the world and of human character; are they an artistic representation? Few will contend that his strength lies in plot, arrangement, story, unless it be in some of his briefer works, such as *The Tragic Comedians* or *The Tale of Chloe*. But are his men and women such as we feel that we might have known, like the best inventions of Scott or of Turgénev? To put the question thus is to be less than fair to Meredith's purpose. He has more than one kind of purpose. Some of his successful creations (we can leave out the big crowd of would-be wits, vague figures, and caricatures) are literal and realistic, others are poetic and imaginative; and he mixes the two kinds in the same narrative. This source of perplexity has been named already in speaking of *Harry Richmond*. What is Squire Beltham doing in the same *world* as Roy, or the oaken Mr. Romfrey in that of Renée, the creature of a vision? It is a

pity that you cannot, in a novel, express the poetic truth in verse and the prosaic truth in prose, as the old dramatists did. The chapter in *Feverel* called 'Wilming Weir' cries aloud for verse; the language is consciously, almost playfully, on the verge of poetic language. Sandra Belloni is a poetical creation; Mr. Pericles is a prose creation, worthy of Ben Jonson. Many of Meredith's favoured ladies are heroines in the world of poetry; and there they are, moving in the world of moral and satiric portraiture, and lighting it up. This is a certain source of confusion to the imagination; but also, of course, a sign of the author's wealth.

He dissects the souls of women, or rather *operates* upon them, in the spirit of a great surgeon, who is indeed all the time a great gentleman, and he works without anæsthetics. He does not spare his darlings one pang. He loves them all the more for being profoundly interesting 'cases.' He leaves us pitying them, not so much for their calamities, as for his 'treatment' of them. They generally get through, though not always, and we are made to see that their sufferings are for the good of their moral being, and a condition of the growth of the human spirit generally, as well as part of the ruthlessness of life itself. They often have the irresistible feminine attraction, and force us to admire without exactly liking them. Rhoda and Carinthia have force and will, without charm. Clara has charm; but she has to be adroit and thorny in order to cope with her 'egoist.' Aminta, as she elopes, is another 'rogue,' in something tougher than porcelain. Clotilde is slippery weakness incarnate. They are all real, in one world or the other. The various penitent and tirading *déclassées* in *Feverel*, *One of Our Conquerors*, and elsewhere (Bella, Mrs. Marsett) are, I think, failures, invented for the sake of the thesis.

The pervading humouristic treatment reconciles us to many things, and takes many shapes. There is a good deal of broad farce; even in *Rhoda Fleming*, that sombre production, there are many capital things, in the earlier Victorian taste, all about dumplings. Elsewhere there is the heroic style, and the mock-romantic, and the mock-Oriental, all good. There is the pathetic jesting patter of Jerry and the Old Chartist. There is the comedy of gross but genuine old wives like Mrs. Berry and Mrs. Chump. There is the ironic comedy of snobbery, with its appanage of sham refinement, in the sisters Harrington and the sisters Pole. There is the true good-natured fun, in which the actors are boys and girls, when Crossjay Patterne or the child

Harry Richmond, or the juvenile Aminta, come upon the stage. Above all, there is the high, Molièresque comedy which Meredith describes in his lecture and practises in *The Egoist*. His thesis is well known ; it is part of his plea for the due recognition and social liberation of women. Women, in a society rightly ordered, and therefore not yet existing, are the arbiters, as well as the possessors, of humane wit ; man's vanities and comic foibles are nursed at the expense of women, who are his judges and more than his equals. High comedy, as a form of art, is that which duly acknowledges this status as their right, which the 'Restoration' comedy did not. Clara, Diana, Janet, Rose, in one way or another, hold up the comic mirror to their admirers, and vindicate the reign of good sense. The status of any given society can be measured by the strength of their position.

All these kinds of humour abound in Meredith ; there is 'God's plenty' of each of them. And they naturally imply a signal power not only of humorous perception—but of creating characters. Perhaps Meredith is least happy in sheer farce, in his Master Gammons and Mrs. Sumfits, and with his professional wits ; even the 'wise youth' Adrian Harley becomes superfluous. His very young people, on the contrary, are alive and never dull. His snobs are apt to be shadowy, and prolix too ; the 'fine shades' of the Poles become insufferable. His fault is to worry a humour to shreds and pulp, in an access of hard high spirits. He is best in the highest ranges of social comedy, where he illustrates his own theory ; and his women, once more, are his most living personages, and are none the less the awarders of comic justice because they are unconscious of the fact and have not themselves a deep sense of humour.

It may be added that he is a master in depicting one intangible personage, namely, *tout le monde*, or what he calls 'the old dog-world,' in its more malevolent operations. This being haunted the imagination of Spenser, who called it the Blatant Beast, and of Shakespeare, who called it Detraction, or Calumny. It pervades Meredith's later novels in particular. Aminta and Nataly, like Hermione and Imogen, though in a different way, are pursued by it, and so is Clotilde von Rüdiger. They all defy the code, the taboos, of the society they live in, and they are worried or hounded accordingly. Meredith makes this process bitterly vivid.

Their men, Fleetwood or Radnor, often bring the Beast about their heels, cut as poor a figure beside them as Posthumus does

beside his wife, and are lucky if they are let off as cheap as Posthumus. Society, engaged in the hunt, is represented by the world of women, the Lady Charlotte Egletts and the Mrs. Burmans, with venom on their tongues, and by the chatter of the club and the mart, and by the frowns of the law. Nor is it always a case of calumny. Sometimes the code has really been broken, as it is by the couple in *One of Our Conquerors* who hide the fact that they are not wedded. Here Meredith, who is neither a romantic rebel nor a rigorist, simply traces the tragedy with dramatic sympathy ; and, as a moralist, he lays the emphasis not upon the actual breach of the code, but on the tragic blunder of Victor Radnor's methods, which end by killing his wife, tormenting his daughter, and driving him insane ; the ' dog-world,' the ' blatant beast,' having been set fatally in motion by his hand. Dame Gossip, in *The Amazing Marriage*, shows Meredith's good-natured side.

XI

We have to do, it is plain, with a great man, who, for all he might think or say about being unpopular, came to be saluted in his lifetime as one of the chieftains of English letters ; and, also, with a great reader of life—less of plain daylight life, it is true, than of life seen through the strangest refracting atmosphere, coloured and quivering incessantly—but life all the same. All the more pressing is the inquiry how Meredith used the instrument of language, especially in his prose ; of his verse something has been said already. For he created a language, or several languages, of his own, which are unlike any other man's. So did Carlyle ; and Carlyle's English, apart from certain tricks and gestures, has made itself good triumphantly, and is a permanently fresh revelation of what English can do and be. So, in a much smaller way, is the English of Sterne. Is Meredith, in this respect, I do not say of the same rank, but of the same tribe as Carlyle ? Because if not, what is to become of him ? It would be idle to say that he provides a mass of immensely valuable moral ideas, though he may not be a good writer. A philosopher may do that and live ; the world will not sacrifice the ideas of Kant, however he may write. But it is not so with an artist. Have we, then, in George Meredith, to do with an artist who, like Carlyle, for good and all ' creates the taste by which he is enjoyed,' or with an artist *manqué*, who uses his instrument ambitiously enough, but who really uses it *wrong*, and who therefore, in the long

run, will only appeal to students and to curious tastes? I would not put this question—especially about a potent humourist, with an humouristic manner—in too portentous tones; but indeed, in the case of a man such as Meredith, it is a serious one, for it is really to ask how far his labour has been wasted. Nor can it be answered without suggesting several distinctions.

We are apt to think first of all of the broideries, happy or otherwise, of Meredith's style, and to forget that it has a most excellent plain foundation. He was nourished on the best authors; he was long a practical journalist, a reviewer, and a 'reader' who sent reports to publishers; and he wrote, in these capacities, a hard business English, never without quality but straightforward enough. It also abounds in his correspondence, and it is the ground-fabric of most of his prose works. This style is muscular, curt, and even abrupt. It is used regularly for the steady parts of the narrative. It may be seen to advantage in *Harry Richmond*, where the hero, a fairly simple person, is the speaker throughout. Harry has to speak simply, though at times he betrays the accent of the author. And even in *The Tragic Comedians*, where the style is at high tension, the actual story is told in clear terms. Later, no doubt, the allusive manner is apt to obscure the incidents. *The Amazing Marriage* is anything but a plain tale; and even as early as *The Egoist* the cross-purposes of the plot are doubly darkened by epigram.

But the true test of style in a novel is in the dialogue rather than in the commentary. There are, it must be said, many painfully clever conversations in the novels, and they suggest Meredith dialoguing with his own double. The wit of his personages, like his own wit, is great, but it is terribly uncertain. How many of his, or of their, myriad *mots* can be remembered? The conversations are like a breathless Badminton match, with the shuttle flying at very close quarters. We get a general vivid sense of how, in Browning's phrase, 'brains, high-blooded, ticked,' half a century since, rather than any definite ideas. But this is when the game of repartee is being played. In impassioned or angry or serious talk—allowing for the rapid elliptical habit, and for a few tricks, such as a too frugal use of the connective atoms of speech—Meredith's creatures speak sound natural English, and speak in character. His power to give the indescribable feminine stamp to language is pre-eminent. If there is a drawback, it is that the dialogue bulks too small in proportion to the chorus. But take a page

from *Lord Ormont*, which is supposed to belong to Meredith's 'difficult' period :

'You decline to call on my wife ?' said the earl.

Lady Charlotte replied : 'Understand me, now. If the woman has won you round to legitimise the connection, first, I 've a proper claim to see her marriage lines. I must have a certificate of her birth. I must have a testified account of her life before you met her and got the worst of it. Then, as the case may be, I 'll call on her.'

'You will behave yourself when you call.'

'But she won't have our family jewels.'

'That affair has been settled by me.'

'I should be expecting to hear of them as decorating the person of one of that man Morsfield's mistresses.'

The earl's brow thickened. 'Charlotte, I smacked your cheek when you were a girl.'

This inspiriting colloquy is somewhat rough, but it is quite unaffected in diction, and many such examples could be given. In high impassioned dialogue, or monologue like that of Alvan in *The Tragic Comedians*, Meredith is by no means so secure and natural. A certain convulsiveness and pervading oddness goes some way towards chilling the reader. But the love-talk of Richard and Lucy, or of Harry and Janet, or of Matthew and Aminta, has usually a noble simplicity of language and is kept sacred from tricks and flourishes.

Much of Meredith's writing is an analytic description of the unspoken feelings of his characters. Here, perhaps, it is at its surest and finest ; here, above all, he adds a new territory to the language. Hence, once more, a lucid expression of obscure things, and not an obscure expression of confused things. The style can be enigmatical and conceited ; but nine times out of ten it is not. Naturally it becomes subtler in course of time, along with the characterisation itself ; the emotions of Rose and Lucy are simpler than those of Emmy or Nataly. Finally, at its best, it becomes like beautiful close goldsmith's work, linked. Here is a passage of middle date, taken from *The Tragic Comedians* :

And still there was time, still hope for Alvan to descend and cut the knot. She conceived it slowly, with some flush of the brain like a remainder of fever, but no throbs of her pulses. She had been swayed to act against him by tales which in her heart she did not credit exactly, therefore did not take within herself, though she let them influence her by the goad of her fears and angers ; and these she could conjure up at will for the defence of her conduct, aware of their shallowness, and all the while trusting to him to come and hear

her reproaches for his delay. He seemed to her now to have the character of a storm outside a household wrapped in comfortable monotony. Her natural spiritedness craved the monotony, her craven soul fawned for the comfort.

Close reading : but the logic of feeling is perfectly traced.

Latterly, as we know, the links are still closer set, and require longer inspection ; the design becomes stranger too ; but the metal remains pure. One more quotation may be offered, describing the awakening of Nataly to the true character of her ' conqueror,' Victor Radnor. The language retains some marks of effort ; the writer's mind is swifter than the reader's, and there is a kind of mental shorthand :

> Her brain was heated for the larger view of things and the swifter summing of them. It could put the man at a remove from her and say, that she had lived with him and suffered intensely. It gathered him to her breast rejoicing in their union : the sharper the scourge, the keener the exultation. But she had one reproach to deafen and beat down. This did not come on her from the world : she and the world were too much foot to foot on the antagonist's line, for her to listen humbly. It came of her quick summary survey of him, which was unnoticed by the woman's present fiery mind as being new or strange in any way : simply it was a fact she now read ; and it directed her to reproach herself for an abasement beneath his leadership, a blind subserviency and surrender of her faculties to his greater powers, such as no soul of a breathing body should yield to man : not to the highest, not to the Titan, not to the most Godlike of men. Under cloak, they demand it. They demand their bane.
>
> And Victor ! . . . She had seen into him.

This sort of writing makes some people impatient, and it would be tough reading on a November morning by candle-light ; but it is of the first rate—of the kind that made Carlyle say that Meredith was ' na fule,' when Mrs. Carlyle read the novels out to him. It is, of course, peculiar to the novel. In a drama the same matter would have to be expressed by a soliloquy ; but then the very use of soliloquy would falsify the analysis ; for by supposition the woman herself could find no words of such a stamp for such a train of feelings. This manner is also peculiar to Meredith ; seeing that others who have tried to use his language after him have not been gifted with the insight required. It would be tempting also to trace his style, with its varying alloy, through his descriptions of external things. It has a different quality as applied to scenery, or to the appearance and gestures of persons, or to passages of violence. But a more general review may suffice.

XII

From first to last, but more especially towards the end, Meredith's style varies in quality, fitfully, like English weather at the end of March ; turbid chilly fog, sudden clearings and darkenings, bright warm spells, bright frosty airs, confused downpour. His English was always ready to be strange, and is often past praying for ; his good acquaintance with French failed to give him a standard ; and the reviewers for half a century past have abused or deplored it in diverse tones, and much of what they have said is too true for repetition ; nor shall these pages be occupied with tedious examples, but only with happy ones. The cause of this horrible strain and artifice is not to be found in any literary models. The pointed wit of Peacock, the manner of Carlyle, have been traced here and there, but they count for little. The little twist by which a good sentence becomes just unnatural, the effort to be clever for hours on end, are idiosyncrasies. Meredith and his personages often talk as drunken witty men might talk in some more cheerful planet than ours, where the rules of earthly language are in abeyance. These habits of speech are partly due to sheer excess of life, to literary playfulness, and to the desire to give relief from the graver matter. It seems worth while adding, however, that Meredith's less fortunate style was the effect, quite as much as the cause, of his unpopularity.

Unpopular he long was, and in part by his deliberate choice, and undeservedly. He became, if not popular, recognised and famous ; and at last he had something like glory. But he apparently would not see this fact, or would not readily admit it. Hence his whimsical disposition to fling a more and more tangled skein in the public's face, and to say to the public : 'You didn't like *that* ? Then, by Heaven, see how you will like *this* ? You *don't* like it ? I thought you wouldn't ; you never liked *me* ! '

Il me plut de servir à ces messieurs une forte dose de ma cuisine la plus indigeste. Je leur présentai sournoisement *Diane des Crossways* et les romans qui suivirent. Mais rien ne les affola comme *Un de nos Conquérants*. Ces pauvres diables ne surent plus à quel saint se vouer. Comment rendre compte du maudit volume ? Il fallait commencer par le comprendre, et ces aveugles tâtonnaient dans leurs épaisses ténèbres !

Such is the report of an admirer [1] who saw Meredith in his old age. We need not, however, take it too literally. Much

as he trimmed and revised his work, we may guess that he was not the best critic, in his own case, of verbal form ; or rather, that his sense of it was keen, but intermittent and easily eclipsed ; and this for the best of all reasons, namely, that he was too big, too much of a sheer force of nature, too like some puissant impatient old Elizabethan pouring out his wealth of wit and feeling pell-mell, to be a sure artist. The critics come well in the rear, picking out and painfully sifting the treasure, which is ample enough. It is the finest of mental exercises for them ; but I do not know that the very greatest writers tax us in that way.

XIII

Still he was himself, on one side of his brain, a critic of real calibre, though his work in this field is not very ample. The reviews which have been rescued show the vitality and variety of his reading ; but he had a Disraelian aversion to the caste of critics, and was one almost in his own despite. Somewhat capricious in taste, he was not ungenerous in comment. His notice of the *Chronicles and Characters* of Robert Lytton, afterwards the Earl of Lytton, is a model of appreciation and shrewd good advice. The same may be said of his remarks on Myers's *St. Paul* and Merivale's version of the *Iliad*. But the lecture, already mentioned, *On the Idea of Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit*, is a classic ; Meredith is here on his own ground and is speaking of his own art. It was delivered at the London Institution in 1877, two years before the appearance of *The Egoist*, that ' comedy in narrative ' where the writer's theories are realised in living form. They, in turn, take their complexion from the character of his creative gift. The lecture consists of two parts, closely interwoven ; it is not a systematic, still less an academic, production. One part is historical and critical ; the schools and great practitioners of comedy are passed in review. Nothing better has been written in our language on Molière, who is the central figure ; but the spirit and gift of Aristophanes, at one end of the comic scale, and of Congreve at the other, are described with equal felicity. The remarks by the way on Terence, Cervantes, and Carlyle are of the same stamp ; the poetical comedy of Shakespeare receives due tribute, but it does not so well fit the thesis, which occupies the second part of the address.

That thesis, to which most of the particular judgements are adjusted, is concerned both with the ' *idea* of comedy ' and with the ' *uses* of the comic spirit.' Comedy, accordingly, is dis-

criminated from farce, from satire, and from mere irony, by its temper and aim. Its temper is prevailingly intellectual; its aim is to provoke 'thoughtful laughter'; it is social, in the highest sense of the term; that is, it implies a humane, alert, un-English kind of society, where women (as explained already) figure as more than the equals of men, and accordingly rule in the comic scene as well as in actual life; where Celimène, the spokeswoman of the sharp sense of her sex, though she be also immeshed in the great world and wisely indisposed to quit it, sees the weak points in the armour of Alceste, the critic of the world, though he may be morally her superior. Comedy, accordingly, is a mirror of this intellectual laughter, of which the animating genius is not simple derision, nor yet mere fun or the moralist's passion for ridiculing mankind into good behaviour, but something more refined and transcendental—good sense in *excelsis* working through winged words. The victim of comedy may be Orgon, or the instructor of Agnès, or it may be Sir Willoughby Patterne. The comic spirit, in fact, rectifies vanity, and egoism, and dull inhumanity—gaily frightens them all into silence or rational behaviour.

The reader of Meredith's stories and letters will remark at once that he is imputing to the 'comic spirit' at large the special complexion of his own temper and aims; and so he is; that is part of the interest of his argument. It is an inspiring temper, and a high generous design. We could hardly wish for a more gifted, a more experienced, a less prudish, a keener-witted or less pedantic moralist. There is nothing new about the alliance of comedy and morality, as the essay itself shows. And it is ratified, not by theorising to which the big world cannot listen, but by the historical succession of the masterpieces, by *L'Ecole des Femmes*, and *Le Misanthrope*, and *Don Quixote*, to which the world must listen; and, let us add, by some chapters of *The Egoist* and of *Harry Richmond* also. In *Harry Richmond* it may be felt that Meredith comes nearest to that free, unfettered, and irresponsible sort of comic invention which is something wider, not indeed than his appreciations but than his express purposes; which he executes so well, but by which his practice, happily, is not always bound. A last illustration will also show once more how excellently Meredith can use his native language when he will, in the service of the 'comic spirit.' Roy Richmond is the narrator referred to:

> Then we read the Arabian Nights together, or, rather, he read them to me, often acting out the incidents as we rode or drove abroad. An omission to perform a duty was the fatal forgetfulness

to sprinkle pepper on the cream tarts ; if my father subjected me to an interrogation concerning my lessons, he was the dread African magician to whom must be surrendered my acquisition of the ring and the musty old lamp. We were quite in the habit of meeting fair Persians. He would frequently ejaculate that he resembled the Three Calendars in more respects than one. To divert me during my recovery from measles, he one day hired an actor in a theatre, and put a cloth round his neck, and seated him in a chair, rubbed his chin with soap, and played the part of the Barber over him, and I have never laughed so much in my life. Poor Mrs. Waddy got her hands at her sides, and kept on gasping, 'Oh, sir ! oh ! ' . . .

CHAPTER XXVI

EPILOGUE

I

Some remarks may be added, by way of afterthought, to this long review. It has been, avowedly, a record of writers and their art rather than a history of movements or tendencies; though some of these have been indicated from time to time. It might be asked whether so rich and variegated a mass of production has any common features at all. It is certainly easy to simplify too much, and to lay down generalities and forget the exceptions. Still, some conclusions may now be offered.

First of all, there was no English writer in all this period who won what is called world-significance, either in prose or in verse; or, for that matter, who deserved to do so; for in such a case winning is deserving. There was no poet like Dante, the evening star of the Middle Ages, or like Shakespeare, the sun of the Renaissance; and there was no Goethe. Nor was there any thinker, at once explosive and constructive, on the scale of Spinoza or of Kant. And no British writer of the time deeply affected the thought or the art of Europe, at any rate in the West; though Mill, Spencer, Dickens, and others were eagerly assimilated in Russia, and though, like Carlyle, they were a good deal translated and studied nearer home. But not even Carlyle gained anything like the wider fame of Hugo, of Ibsen, or of Tolstoy. Nor did any inventor sow his seed broadcast as Scott or Byron had done in the preceding age. Sterne and Richardson, in fact, left a deeper imprint in France than all the Victorian novelists. There is nothing in the nineteenth century like those followings of *The Spectator*, of *Robinson Crusoe*, or of *The Seasons*, which are found in France or Germany during the eighteenth. Many of our most cherished authors like Browning and George Meredith were only known abroad to students and the curious. The public, then, of the Victorian writers was chiefly the English-speaking world. It is true that this is considerable.

But if England did not give much to other literatures, she

drew a great deal of sustenance from them. The imports decidedly exceeded the exports ; and to describe the imports would need another book, on quite a different plan from this. Many chapters of such a work would be occupied with the influence of Germany upon English philosophy, scholarship, exegesis, theology, poetry, and fiction. But that influence, in spite of *Sartor*, and of the translations and studies of Goethe or Heine, figures much more in ' applied ' than it does in pure literature. And, on the whole, the same is true of the influence of France, which is chiefly seen, on the philosophic side, in the literature of Comtism ; Carlyle's *French Revolution* and Swinburne's devotion to the romantic poets being somewhat isolated phenomena. The French influence is strongest of all in the field of criticism, as the chapters on Matthew Arnold and on Walter Pater ought to have shown. And Italy, as ever, inspired the English mind in a twofold way ; first through the increased study of her literature, and especially of Dante ; and secondly through the sympathy begotten by her successful struggle for freedom. But for that great event we should not have had work like *Songs Before Sunrise* or *Vittoria*. The traces left by Mazzini, and also by Leopardi, in England have still to be properly explored.

Another long chapter of our imaginary volume would be concerned with the study of the antique during this period by the thinkers, the scholars, and the poets. And Greek would count for more than Latin, which still would count for much. We cannot reckon the brain-waves set in motion by a book like Jowett's *Plato*. Five of the major poets, Tennyson, Browning, Matthew Arnold, William Morris, and Swinburne, manipulated Greek stories, each in his own way. The critics, too, were constantly looking to Greek theory, precept, and practice. Again, the mediæval revival, which was so greatly inspirited after 1850, is another long story. Many of these topics have been touched upon in the preceding pages ; enough, at all events, to show that our literature, in this aspect, was not insular, but was more and more moulded by the ' best that has been said and thought in the world.' But the unborn dissertations in this field are too many to specify.

II

But what was *made* of all this inspiration ? That is the question ; for judgement, in such cases, goes only by results. The simplest general answer is given by a comparison with

other great periods of English literature. Some remarks made in the first chapter may now be amplified in the light of our review. The strength of our Renaissance literature lay in force and depth of passion—including intellectual passion ; in superabundance of life ; in splendour and curiosity of form ; and in the presence of Shakespeare, who was sufficient, all by himself, to give poetry more weight in the balance than prose. The strength of our eighteenth-century literature lay in its sanity and rational composure, in its knowledge and acceptance of the world of men, and in its economy of form ; the balance was now on the side of prose. The strength of our romantic literature lay in its repudiation of the world of man, in its straining after the infinite, in its quest for beauty, and in its mastery of imaginative and inventive forms—poetry, fiction, fantasy, and confession. These it preferred to methodic or philosophic form ; so that once more poetry outweighed prose, even if we reckon in the prose that did the work of poetry. Where, then, does the strength lie, broadly speaking, of the literature produced from 1830 to 1880 ? It has one conspicuous quality, at any rate ; the quality of nobleness.

In watching the course of philosophical and theological writing, we have seen a great ferment of thought, which involved both the rejection and the vehement reassertion of accepted doctrine ; and, accordingly, many endeavours both to found and to overthrow a new kind of natural religion, based simply on the data of this world, and of the life we know. In watching verse and fiction, we have seen the prevalence, in many forms, of an intensely ethical, exalted, and didactic temper. But crossing this—especially after 1850, and in the field of poetry—there was a different strain, a different temper, and this was the passion for pure beauty. Well, in all these great departments of letters, the common feature, the broadest feature, was nobleness. It is just as strong in the poets who raise altars to beauty as it is in the philosophers, the divines, the moralists, and the novelists, and in the poets who are, like Browning, primarily concerned with life and conduct.

This, no doubt, has been said often enough before. The word *nobleness* has become almost a cant expression in reference to the Victorian age. How frequently, and with what ambiguities, it was used by Ruskin has been remarked already. But since his time the accent has changed. Sometimes the word is repeated by the regretful praiser of the past, who sighs as he seems to watch the last rays, and the lordly pillar, of that lighthouse-landmark receding in the mist ; sometimes with

respectful, interested curiosity, as when we speak of something long ago, like the fire and flame of the Elizabethans; and sometimes, on meaner lips, in the tones of dismissal, as though we lived in better times, now that force-worship is cleared of the old hypocrisies and art is seen to have no concern with ethics. But this last attitude of mind is already, I think, itself a matter of history; and I must return to it presently in glancing at the state of taste about the year 1880. We are now far enough off to say, without any feeling except admiration, that nobleness really is the great and leading quality of English literature between 1830 and 1880. Now, no one would say that about any other period in our history; nay, no one would say it even about the age of Milton, however much Milton himself may weight the scale. It is a nobleness, no doubt, a little conscious and militant; the temper is that of the champion up in arms; but what of that? It may be said that all high literature in some sense is 'noble'; and that is true also; but then not all high literature of it has the special accent that is heard everywhere in Carlyle and Ruskin—that is heard in

> No, let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers
> The heroes of old;

or in

> By rose-hung river and lightfoot rill
> There are who rest not . . .;

or in

> Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods;

or in

> Still nursing the unconquerable hope.

This is the temper that produces the 'grand style,' that much-discussed achievement; we may not say that no other temper is able to produce it; but we can truly say that in the nineteenth century it is produced, owing to a pervading nobility of spirit, more abundantly.

III

But now to turn to a question of pure art. I said in the first chapter that this period was signalised by 'a swift and splendid development of the art of prose'; and this statement, if it needed proving, may perhaps be taken now as proved. What, then, are the broad distinguishing features of Victorian prose? They are, above all, rapidity and amplitude of movement. When we open a page of Ruskin, of Dickens, or of Huxley, one of the first things we exclaim is—*ça marche!* The

stream sweeps on, 'over deep and over shallow,' with a large harmonious noise. The history of English prose rhythm has already been written for our instruction ; the history of English prose art, as a whole, has still to be written. And its historian, when he comes to speak of our Victorian prose, will, I think, speak first of its rapidity and amplitude of movement. Our Renaissance prose certainly has those qualities too ; but then our Victorian prose, though it may not be, summit for summit, an absolutely greater performance, still has this advantage, that it is much more *formed* than our Renaissance prose. And it is more formed, because the classical age, with all its priceless lessons in the art of form—lessons in economy, precision, reasonableness, and ease—had come between. The nineteenth century may not have greater writers to show than Bacon or Sir Thomas Browne ; but it has more great writers to show, and much more good writing, in the department of prose. It also has more to show, and more great prose to show, than even the eighteenth century, to which it owes so much. It has more, because it has not only much excellent prose of the purer eighteenth-century stamp like Macaulay's or Thackeray's ; but because its prose is also touched by the pure imagination, and by the poetic spirit, at so many more points than is even that of the age of Burke ; nor can the appeal of its prose even to the pure intellect be said to be inferior.

IV

By the nineteenth century, or the Victorian age, I here mean the fifty years discussed in the present chronicle. For the year 1880, or thereabouts, is a genuine date in our literature ; although, as the preceding chapters have shown, it must not be taken too rigidly, and although it is a much more definite date in some departments than in others. Most of the chief writers who disappear in the Eighties had gone on working till near the end, with the exception of Carlyle, who departed, after a long silence, in 1881. In the same year Lord Beaconsfield, George Eliot, and Stanley also died ; and in 1882 Darwin, Dante Rossetti, Trollope, and James Thomson. In 1888-9 Matthew Arnold, Browning, and Sir Henry Maine followed. Tennyson, Ruskin, Newman, Swinburne went on writing, some more and some less, but all without loss of vivacity and skill. Yet they are still elaborating old themes. *Crossing the Bar*, *Fors Clavigera*, and *Westminster Abbey*, are all in the nature of an afterglow. Two of the veterans, William Morris and George

Meredith, show surprising freshness of invention even during the Eighties and Nineties; but their dreams and thoughts are naturally not those of the new generation. I will not name some other labourers in the vineyard who are happily still active; some of them began to write in the Seventies, or yet earlier, and all of them carry on the great tradition; and they have lived to see the end of the age which succeeded that of their own upbringing. All this overlapping obscures the changes which came over the scene and spirit of letters during the last two decades of the century, and two of which ought here to be indicated. One of them concerns the spirit of letters generally; the second is concerned with the art of prose in particular.

The change in spirit may be described, without prejudice, and using the term in a large sense, as the decay of liberalism. No more classics of the new faith like Mill *On Liberty*, or like *Songs Before Sunrise*! Survivors like Sir Leslie Stephen carry on this warfare; but the best of the new writers do not take it up. Various reactions gather strength; the reaction towards *a priori* philosophy, the reaction towards mysticism. The stoical intellectualism of the former age is at a discount. And these reactions, which are at their height at the present moment (1920), have been at work ever since 1880. They are, of course, rooted in tendencies of an earlier time, some of which I have tried to note. In my own belief, which it would be out of place to argue here, the change means simply this: that reason, and science, and the enthusiasm of humanity, which spoke out so bravely in the third quarter of the last century, left many facts of human nature, emotional and spiritual, out of their reckoning, and made too hasty a synthesis; that these facts, as always happens, revenged themselves upon the theories which overlooked them; that reason, in consequence, became awhile discredited; that the next task of reason is to catch up with the facts that she had ignored, and to reassert her natural supremacy; and that to do this service for reason is the business of that coming age which most of us will not live to see. And I believe that there has always been this kind of rhythm in the history of thought; reason overtaking the facts, and then being left behind and defeated, and then recovering, and so on indefinitely; and that the true and only sure hope for humanity lies in reason's permanent, insuppressible power of self-recovery.

However, I wish to deal here in things that are on record and not in prophecies or confessions of faith. It is needless to

tread on disputed ground ; enough that towards the end of the century there can be watched the decay, not only of liberalism, but of the great fighting, imaginative prose and verse of the period, of whatever cast of opinion. Newman goes, as well as Mill ; Browning goes, though Swinburne survives much longer ; and Ruskin goes. No writers, of anything like the same order of power, take their places ; and the new writers who appear and flourish, some of them eminent and remarkable writers, are of another temper. Is it an illusion, too, that the ancient nobleness declines ? It is to be feared not. Look, for one thing, how Carlyle's old force-worship, founded as it is in his belief in providence, and thereby to some extent kept straight, is transformed, partly under the influence of German theory and practice, into a sheer belief in success and in the event. Look how the fraternal and cosmopolitan ideal, and the 'enthusiasm of humanity,' which appealed to so many of the best spirits, gave way to the newer—which we may now call the older—kind of imperialism, which bred its own statesmen and its own trumpeters. Look, again, how the old geniality or hopefulness, which we have seen in the great novelists, gave way, in the strongest novelists of the new age, to a pessimistic or ironical spirit, 'noble' enough indeed in its own fashion, but an impossible thing for the world to live upon. These changes are part of the history of the English mind ; they had to come, and they may or may not be well in themselves ; but it would be a bold thing to say that they were well for literature. Moreover, there was not nearly so much good writing of all kinds from 1880 to 1900 as there had been from 1860 to 1880. The average competence of argumentative pens increased, but that is not enough. The better journalism multiplied exceedingly, but that is not enough. There was some very delicate poetry written, and also some very vociferous poetry, but that is not enough. No, those last twenty years mark an ebb in English literature, an ebb which begins to be felt about 1880, in spite of the survival of several great men. I am speaking now not of ideas and opinions, but of the history of the fine art of writing ; and am trying to justify the choice of the decade of the Eighties as the latter limit for this chronicle.

V

The second and much narrower change, which also seems to bear out that choice, is to be seen in the art of prose. For prose begins, in the Eighties, to lose just that amplitude and rapidity of movement which had distinguished it before. There

are clear signs of this loss in Pater, whose influence was itself a cause of the loss. The example of Flaubert, whom he made more familiar, counted for something too. The new writers incline to concentrate on minute felicities of form, and to tessellate their style like a mosaic, or to carve it like ivory. The result, in story-tellers so different as Henry James and Robert Louis Stevenson, is often delightful and wonderful; but the large free movement is gone; and it is gone, too, in some of the new critics of their time, who follow Pater rather than Matthew Arnold. The phrase: they are not happy till they have got the phrase! They save it up, and burnish it, and inlay it, till you cannot see the page for the phrase, and you have to read slowly, because these writers go slowly. But then Ruskin, who goes fast, and whom you can read fast, is also a master of phrase. With all his faults, he is as generous, and sometimes as wasteful, as the nature that he describes. He abounds, and abounds easily, in perfect phrases; they burn upon his page like the endless blossoms of an Eastern torch-tree. Nice finish, and thrift, and painfully exquisite placing of syllables, though they are all good and pleasureable things, do not make up for the absence of this quality. There must indeed come, and in fact there has already come, a revulsion towards a larger manner of prose discourse.

NOTES

p. 1. **D. G. Rossetti.** W. M. Rossetti edited: *Rossetti, his Family Letters and Memorials*, with memoir, 2 vols., 1895; *Ruskin, Rossetti, Præraphaelitism; Papers, 1854-62*, 1899; *Præraph. Diaries and Letters*, 1900; *Rossetti Papers, 1862-70*, 1903; *Some Reminiscences*, 2 vols., 1906. For other biographical matter see Hall Caine, *Recollections of R.*, 1882; *Letters of D. G. R. to W. Allingham, 1854-70*, ed. G. B. Hill, 1897. J. Knight, *Life of R.*, 1887; W. Bell Scott, *Autobiog. Notes*, 2 vols., 1892; these two works should be checked by those of W. M. R., who is also his brother's editor; *Coll. Works*, 2 vols., 1886; *Poet.* [*i.e.* original] *Works*, 1891; *Dante and His Circle*, 1892. On the artistic side, see F. G. Stephens, *D. G. R.*, 1894; G. Mourey, *D. G. R. et les Préraph. anglais*, 1909; H. G. Marillier, *D. G. R.*, 1899. Among criticisms, see W. Pater, in *Appreciations*; Sir W. Raleigh, in *Chambers's Cycl. of Eng. Lit.*, iii. 641. On the Rossettis, Morris and Swinburne see the admirable chapter (v.) by A. Hamilton Thompson in *Camb. Hist. Eng. Lit.*, xiii. 110-146 (1916).

p. 3. '**The Germ.**' Reprinted in facsimile, 1898, by W. M. Rossetti, with an interesting preface. Also, earlier in 1898, and less accurately, by T. B. Mosher, Portland, Maine, with essay by J. Ashcroft Noble. The verses of W. Bell Scott, and the paper *On the Mechanism of a Historical Picture*, by F. Madox Brown, may also be noted.

p. 5, note 1. **Burne-Jones.** *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, by G. B.-J., 2 vols., 1902, ii. 264.

p. 5, note 2. '**The Blessed Damozel.**' The four extant versions are in *The Germ* (1850), *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* (1856), *Poems* (1870), and *Poems* (1881). The chief differences are between the first three versions. A correct collation throws much light on Rossetti's art.

p. 6. **Gordon Hake.** See his *Memories of Eighty Years*, 1892, pp. 216-18: 'That she can see the earth spin like a fretful midge, does not please the logical understanding, when that body is at least as far off as the scarce visible sun,' etc. Apter is the description of the damozel as 'a sort of nun living among the holy, while all her reflections are human; the burden of them from first to last on love for an absent one, without whose presence she can find no happiness in her purgatorial heaven.'

p. 9. **metrical freedoms.** Rossetti printed 143 English sonnets, of which 102 belong to *The House of Life*. Of the total number, (1) 46 have a new rhyme in the sixth and seventh lines; and this occurs ten times in the sonnets upon pictures. (2) 25 end with a couplet, and eleven out of these 25 also have variation (1), the new rhyme. (3) Ten sonnets are printed continuously, to

show that the break before the ninth line is disregarded. (4) Two sonnets (*H. of L.*, l., li.) have *rima alternata* in the octave. (5) Two in Italian as well as English, *Proserpina* and *La Bella Mano*.

p. 22. **Christina Rossetti.** *Family Letters of C. G. R.*, 1908; *Poet. Works*, 1904: both ed. by W. M. Rossetti. The latter contains an authoritative memoir, and full notes and chronological data. The prose works have not been collected.

p. 31. **Morris.** *Bibliography of the Works of W. M.*, by Temple Scott, 1897 (classified under original poems, translations, romances, etc.); H. Buxton Forman, *The Books of W. M.*, 1897, contains valuable details on contributions to periodicals, *inter alia*. *Works*, many edd., the fullest *The Collected Works of W. M.*, with introductions by Miss May Morris, 24 vols., 1910 ff. (cited here as *Works*); this too has bibl. notes, and the introductions contain many previously unprinted poems, variants, etc. J. W. Mackail, *Life of W. M.*, 2 vols., 1899; the reprint, 2 vols., 1907, is cited *supra*. A. Noyes, *W. M.* (Eng. Men of Letters), 1908. The best summary account (supplementing the admirable *Life*) is the lecture by J. W. Mackail to the Hammersmith Socialist Society, 1900. See too Lady Burne-Jones, *Memorials of E. Burne-Jones*, 2 vols., 1904, and the Rossetti literature, named *supra* in note to p. 1, for other reff. *Poetic Romances after 1850*, by O. Elton (Warton Lecture to British Academy, No. v., 1914), treats of the ballads, romances, and lays of this period and school.

p. 33, note 1. **reviews.** For other authors see *Life*, i. 90-1; where it is said that 'all lists hitherto published [before 1899] are inaccurate in important particulars.' For such lists see T. Scott, *Bibliog.*, p. 38, and Buxton Forman, *Books of W. M.*

p. 33, note 2. **prose tales.** *Works*, vol. i.; also in *The Early Romances of W. M. in Prose and Verse*, introd. by A. Noyes ('Everyman's Library') [1907]; and in *Prose and Poetry (1856-1870) by W. M.*, Oxford, 1913, which also includes the vol. of 1858, *Jason*, and some other pieces.

p. 35. **Scenes from the Fall of Troy.** For plan and extracts, see *Life*, i. 166-173; and for the whole, *Works*, vol. xx.

p. 36. **Apollonius Rhodius.** See H. Sybil Kermode, 'The Classical Sources of *Jason*,' in *Primitiae* (Essays by students of the University of Liverpool), 1912.

p. 38. **subjects in 'Earthly Paradise.'** For sources see J. Riegel, *Die Quellen von . . . The Earthly Paradise*, Erlangen, 1890 (Erlanger Beiträge zur eng. Philologie, Heft ix.). See too *Life*, i. 204-6, for mention of other tales, unpublished or unfinished. The plan of the cycle was modified a good deal; *ib.*, i. 195-6.

p. 39. **alliterative line.** See Saintsbury, *Hist. Eng. Prosody*, iii. 328-9, for an unfavourable view of its 'tumbling scramble.'

p. 40, note 1. **Bolli and Gudrun.** In *Gísli Súrsson, a Drama*, etc., by Beatrice Helen Barmby (pref. by F. York Powell), 1900, pp. 128-9. In *Sigurd* metre, but only 22 lines. When will this author's dramatisation of *Gísla Saga*, in the title-poem of her book, cease to be smothered under the rubble-heap of contemporary verse?

p. 40, note 2. **the original.** See *e.g.* the dilutions of *Laxdaela Saga*, ch. xxxiii. (swimming); ch. xlv. (Kiartan and Hrefna); and ch. xlix. (slaying of Kiartan): and the poet's omissions in ch. xxxix. (Olaf's bodings), and in ch. xlix.

(the superb dialogue of Bolli and Gudrun). There is a translation of this saga by Muriel A. C. Press, 1906.

p. 41, note 1. **journals in Iceland.** In *Works*, vol. viii. The sentences quoted are on pp. 126-7.

p. 41, note 2. **passages.** See *Life*, i. 263-4, 'Lo here an ancient chronicle,' on the nameless sagaman, the 'tale-teller of vanished men'; poetry being to Morris, well says Mr. Mackail, 'a help in the darkness until a new day should come, not for one person or another, but for all the world.' Also the prose extract in *Life*, i. 333-4, 'It may be that the world shall worsen,' etc.

p. 44. **Goethe and Saxo.** *Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe*, ed. 1856, i. 316.

p. 45. **dates** (of *Poems by the Way*); see *Works*, vol. ix. pp. xxxiv-xxxvii.

p. 46. **mass of production (1878-90).** See T. Scott, *Bibliog.*, pp. 38-60, 'contributions to periodicals,' and H. B. Forman, *Books of W. M.*, by whom the writings in *Justice* and *The Commonweal* are detailed.

p. 55. **Swinburne.** Bibliographies by J. C. Thomson, 1905, and by T. J. Wise (of 'scarce works and uncollected writings'), 1897; see also C. E. Vaughan, in No. 29, Eng. Association pamphlets, and *C. E. L.*, vol. xiii., ch. v. Standard *Life* by E. Gosse, 1917 (see too his excellent art. in *D. N. B.*, Suppl. ii., 1912); supplemented by Mrs. Disney Leith, *The Boyhood of A. C. S.*, 1917; and by the *Letters of A. C. S.*, ed. T. Hake and A. Compton-Rickett, 1918. There are vivid personal descriptions by Lady Burne-Jones in *Memorials of E. Burne-Jones*, 1904. The definitive ed. of the *Poems* is the poet's own, 6 vols., 1904, with a notable preface; and so with his *Tragedies*, 5 vols., 1905-6. These do not include *The Duke of Gandia*, 1908; and there is a vol. of *Posthumous Poems*, ed. E. Gosse and T. J. Wise, 1917, the best things in which are the unearthed Northumbrian ballads. There is thus far no collected ed. of the prose works, but most of them are accessible. There is apparently no reprint of the *Notes on Poems and Reviews*, 1866. For some criticisms see J. W. Mackail, *S., a Lecture*, 1909; and volumes by G. E. Woodberry, N.Y., 1905; E. Thomas, 1912; J. Drinkwater, 1913; and T. E. Welby, 1914; also an art. by O. Elton in *Modern Studies*, 1907. I cannot recount my debts to Mr. Gosse's biography: and have also had the advantage of a printed catalogue of the works of Swinburne included in his private library.

p. 56, note 1. **Landor.** See W. B. Drayton Henderson, *Swinburne and Landor*, 1918: an able thesis designed to show (*inter alia*) that Swinburne's devotion to Landor affected his genius far more than has been supposed. Some of the writer's points are forced; the links on the theological side between the two poets are shadowy; nor is it safe to read into the figurative speech of the *Prelude* to the *Songs before Sunrise* a reference to Landor. But Mr. Henderson rightly makes much of *Thalassius*, and I accept his view with one reserve. The poet, on escaping from the Bassarids, renews his loftier song, and he is then blessed by Apollo his father; but *not* by his foster-father, the patriarchal Landor. The memory and influence of Landor cannot be shown to have liberated Swinburne from his amorous nihilism. That was done by Italy, and Mazzini, and France. See a review (of which I do not know the author) of this thesis in *Times Lit. Suppl.*, May 2, 1918, and quotation there from letter to Lord Houghton helping to clinch the identity of the 'foster-father' with Landor.

p. 56, note 2. **collegian.** On this see Gosse, *Life*, p. 21, etc.

p. 57. **Poems and Ballads** (first series). See W. D. B. Henderson, *op. cit.*, for evidence and conjectures as to dates of composition. Seven pieces, including *Faustine*, came out in the *Spectator* in 1862 (see Wise, *Bibliography*, etc.); but the attempt to date further on the strength of internal cross-correspondences of phrase and feeling is unsafe; and the attempt to establish a sequence of dates by a supposed sequence of feelings assumes that the poet never fluctuated to and fro in his moods. On the difficulties see Gosse, *Life*, pp. 144-6. Mr. Henderson's Appendices VII.-X. point out, however, many parallels of interest, sometimes too close to be accidental, with Matthew Arnold (*Empedocles*), Meredith's *Modern Love*, Baudelaire, and Hugo.

p. 59, note 1. **Pilgrimage of Pleasure.** Written in 1864, and inserted in *The Children of the Chapel*, by Mrs. Disney Leith, the poet's cousin; a work first published in 1864, and again in 1910 with a preface making plain for the first time Swinburne's part in it. He also oversaw and revised the pleasant little prose tale itself.

p. 59, note 2. **folk-ballad.** Mr. Gosse's preface to the *Posthumous Poems* contains useful lore about these unearthed ballads, and the remarks in my text (including quotation from Morris) are founded thereon. The 'surmise' that Morris and Rossetti thought these pieces 'too rough and bare for publication' (p. ix) is likely enough. *Lord Scales* and the unfinished *Earl of Mar's Daughter* show the same deliberate roughening.

p. 64. **necrological eulogies.** Rickett and Hake, *Letters*, p. 89.

p. 66. **Mazzini.** See an excellent note by Angelo Crespi on 'Mazzini and England' in the *Anglo-Italian Review*, July 1918, vol. i. (No. 3), pp. 261-5: where it is pointed out that Mazzini thought of the French Revolution as the end rather than the opening of an era; that he believed in the universal Church of Humanity: that in his view the utilitarian and capitalist system merely continued the old revolutionary individualism; while the liberal-pacifist non-interventionist school assumed a sense, which does not yet prevail reciprocally, of the 'mutual obligations between nations,' etc. Swinburne is not named: but it is clear that he was able to absorb only one side, though a lofty one, of his master's teaching. For Mazzini's existence in England, see above all the Carlyle literature, as well as the notices in Gosse's *Life of Swinburne*. See too Lord Morley, *Recollections*, 1917, i. 75-80.

p. 69, note 1. **Tyndall.** Rickett and Hake, *Letters*, p. 89. For Swinburne's words on *Hertha* see Gosse, *Life*, p. 193.

p. 69, note 2. **a question.** This *if* is often repeated: *e.g.* in *Life in Death*, 1891; in *A Reminiscence*, 1894; and in *A New Year's Eve*, 1894 (on the death of Christina Rossetti). It seems to represent only an occasional mood. All these poems are of exceptional beauty; the last-named ends thus:

> Who knows? We know not. Afar, if the dead be far,
> Alive, if the dead be alive as the soul's works are,
> The soul whose breath was among us a heavenward song
> Sings, loves, and shines as it shines for us here a star.

p. 76. **Mary Stuart.** See Gosse, *Life*, pp. 123-32, for an admirable account of *Chastelard*; and pp. 257-9 for Prof. Hume Brown's favourable judgement on Swinburne's picture of Mary. 'In his selection of events, their sequence, and

connexion he appears to have generally followed Froude. . . . But while Froude's narrative makes prominent the bad that he saw in her, Swinburne presents her character as a whole, and exhibits her good and evil qualities in equal relief.' On Chastelard and Mary Beaton, see A. Lang, *Hist. of Eng. Lit.*, 1912, p. 604.

p. 78, note 1. **language.** See John Drinkwater, *Swinburne, an Estimate*, 1913, p. 21 : 'His joy in speech sometimes led him into the artistic folly of mistaking it for a diviner thing than it was ; but sometimes it discovered for him a new source of poetry, one that he alone knew, supplying from its own nature the impulse that must commonly be bestowed from without, from the poet's vision.' Mr. Drinkwater's first chapter, on 'lyric technique,' touches with nicety on the sources of our varying contentment and discontent with Swinburne's poetic language.

p. 78, note 2. **metrical art.** For much analysis and appreciation in brief compass see Saintsbury, *Hist. of Eng. Prosody*, iii. 334-52.

p. 85. **lesser poets.** For this and the next chapter see above all *Camb. Hist. Eng. Lit.*, xiii. 147-224, *i.e.* ch. vi. by G. Saintsbury on 'Lesser Poets' (of the middle and later nineteenth century) ; also *id.*, bibliography, pp. 497-511, by G. A. B[rown], which dispenses me from overloading the notes on this throng of poets. See also the chapters on the lesser poets in H. Walker, *Victorian Literature*, 1910, for a highly suggestive review, at many points fuller, and sometimes more lenient, than my own.

p. 86. **Wade.** All I know and quote is from H. Buxton Forman's contribution to *Lit. Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, 1895, i. 45-164 : which gives 50 sonnets from various sources, the *Contention*, *Helena*, and a biographical note. The plays I have not seen ; from the description, they seem to have been in the current Elizabethan mode. The translation from Dante (in *terza rima*) was not published.

p. 89. **Horne.** See H. Buxton Forman's memoirs in *D. N. B.*, and in *Lit. Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Cent.*, i. 235-48, where *The Ballad of Delora* is reprinted, along with the poet's odd marginal comments, in prose, upon his own poem, which appeared first in *Ballads and Romances* (1846). *The Death of Marlowe* is reprinted in A. H. Bullen's *Works of Marlowe*, 3 vols., 1885, iii. 317-53. *Orion*, 'the farthing epic,' was offered to the public at that sum, at which three editions were actually bought up (Buxton Forman, *l.c.*, p. 240).

p. 95. **David Gray** (1838-61). *The Luggie, and other Poems*, 1862 ; *Poet. Works*, ed. H. Glassford Bell, 1874. Gray hardly came in sight of anything like a personal style, dying so soon, and I have not said more of him in the text ; but he had sensibility and promise ; and his verse on the river Luggie is an unusually late example of the study of *The Seasons* and its diction.

p. 96. **Clough.** *Poems*, ed. H. S. Milford, 1910. *Poems and Prose Remains*, ed. Mrs. Clough, 2 vols., 1869.

p. 98. **Coventry Patmore.** The standard biography is *Memoirs and Corresp. of C. P.*, by Basil Champneys, 2 vols., 1901 ; vol. ii. contains many extracts from papers, and letters to as well as from Patmore. The best personal and critical sketch is E. Gosse's *C. P.*, 1905 (in 'Literary Lives' series) ; it includes several extracts from MS. and other versions not in the *textus receptus* of the poems. There seems to be as yet no critical collation of Patmore's texts. For short bibliography see Champneys, i. xxv-xxvi ; and for

some dates of early articles, *id.*, i. 109-10 note. *English Metrical Law* is accessible in *Amelia, Tamerton Church Tower*, etc., 1878; it should be re-issued.

p. 104. **Dolben.** *The Poems of D. M. D.*, ed. with memoir by Robert Bridges, 1911. The record by the Laureate, who was Dolben's schoolfellow and close friend, contains letters, and gives a picture, for the rescue of which thanks are due, of the young life and aspiration of fifty years ago.

p. 105. **Scott and Macaulay.** So Hawker, in note printed to *Song*, in *Cornish Ballads*, ed. 2, 1884 (posthumous). I have not traced this fact yet in the Scott literature. The *Song* was printed first in a local paper, and then in the *Gent. Mag.*, 1827 (for details see *D. N. B.* article). As to Macaulay, there is still a mystery; and Prof. C. H. Firth kindly tells me that he has never 'been able to get to the bottom of the Trelawny ballad.' Macaulay, *Hist.*, ch. viii., quotes the burden-couplet, and also a variant of its last line, as 'obligingly communicated by' Hawker; and accepts it as ancient ('the miners from their caverns re-echoed,' etc.). Hawker, on his side, implies that the *whole* poem was 'praised under the same persuasion' (of its antiquity) by Macaulay. The odd thing is that the burden in the *Song* as printed by Hawker is *not* that which he 'obligingly' sent to Macaulay: the 20,000 men become in the *History* 30,000 boys, and the '20,000 underground' do not figure in the *Song* at all. Hawker is suspect throughout; 'the burden,' says Mr. Firth, 'may be old, but there is no proof'; and adds that H. 'produced a number of sham antiques and seventeenth-century letters and documents which he mixed up with a few genuine ones and published in periodicals'; *e.g.* the 'letter of one Anthony Payne on the death of Sir Bevil Grenville' (in *Footprints*, etc., 1870, p. 39). Dickens at first saluted the song as old in *Household Words*, but soon retracted.

p. 107. **Dixon.** *Poems* (selection, with memoir, by R. Bridges), 1910.

p. 109, note 1. **Gordon Hake.** *Memories of Eighty Years*, 1892, a somewhat rambling volume, but with interesting keen criticisms of Rossetti's poetry, and many reminiscences of him. *Poems*, selected by Alice Meynell, 1894.

p. 109, note 2. **George Macdonald.** *Poetical Works*, 2 vols., 1893.

p. 110. **O'Shaughnessy.** Works not reprinted; selections in Palgrave, *Golden Treasury*, second series. See Garnett's art. in *D. N. B.*; also Louise C. Moulton, *A. O'S., his Life and his Work*, 1894. *Lays of France* are anticipated in *Bisclavaret*, the werewolf poem, which occurs in *An Epic of Women* and comes from Marie.

p. 113, note 1. **P. B. Marston.** *Collected Poems*, with biographical sketch by Louise Chandler Moulton, 1892.

p. 113, note 2. **FitzGerald.** T. Wright, *Life of E. F.*, 2 vols., 1904, is a minute record of the poet's circle as well as of himself. The *Letters and Lit. Remains*, ed. W. Aldis Wright, 7 vols., 1902, absorb the previous collections of letters made by the same editor. See too W. F. Prideaux, *Notes for a Bibliography of E. F.*, 1901; and A. C. Benson, *E. F.*, 1905, in 'Eng. Men of Letters.' The four ed. of the *Rubáiyát* are given by Aldis Wright, vol. vii., and are also in a 'Golden Treasury' vol. For their relationship to Omar see E. Heron-Allen's *Facsimile of the* [Ouseley] *MS. in the Bodleian*, 1898, with all apparatus, and still more his *F.'s Rubá'iyát*, etc., 1899. See too *The Rubá'iyát*, etc., 1900, commentary by H. M. Batson, introd. by E. Denison Ross. Other

translations from Omar by J. Payne, 1898 (Villon Soc.), in the original measures; by E. H. Whinfield, 1882, commended by scholars; and by J. H. McCarthy, 1891. N. H. Dole's *Rubáiyát of O. K.*, etc., 2 vols., Boston, 1896, arranges English, French and German versions besides FitzGerald's, with much commentary.

p. 115. **The Broad Stone of Honour; or Rules for the Gentlemen of England.** The first ed., 1823, was expanded into four sections, often reprinted. The work is a moral and religious discourse, written by a fervent Catholic, and based on a Burton-like fulness of quotation and allusion, classical as well as mediæval. The spirit is generous, and there is plenty of real chivalry in Digby. But his book, in its later shapes, is so immersed in matter as to be scarcely a book. There is a *Memoir* of Digby, by Bernard Holland, 1919, which I have not been able to see; it has been reviewed by G. C. Moore Smith in *Mod. Lang. Rev.* for Oct. 1919, the bibliography of Digby's chief work being there dealt with on p. 432 n.

p. 118, note 1. **authority.** From Heron-Allen, *Rubá'iyát*, etc., 1899, p. xii. The Persian text and literal translation is given of every *rubai* on which FitzGerald may have drawn.

p. 118, note 2. **versions compared.** See the collations by Aldis Wright, *Letters and Lit. Remains*, vol. vii.

p. 119. **diverse creeds.** John Payne, in his Villon Society translation, 1898, falls foul of FitzGerald for falsifying Omar by his selection and manipulation of the originals; needlessly, for FitzGerald never affected to do anything but pick and choose and 'mash' different verses together. Mr. Payne, however, seems to prove that many poems assigned to Omar are tinged with mystical Hindu pantheism; a feature that only comes out, perhaps, in FitzGerald's familiar 'no more of ME and THEE!'

p. 120. **James Thomson.** The *Life*, by H. S. Salt, 1889, contains many letters; and there is a memoir, supplementing Salt's, by Bertram Dobell, in his ed. of the *Poetical Works*, 2 vols., 1895, wherein the dates of composition are given for most of the poems. See also Thomson's *Biographical and Critical Studies*, ed. B. Dobell, 1896; which include papers on Saint-Amant, Hogg, John Wilson, and Garth Wilkinson the Swedenborgian, besides Blake, Shelley, and Browning. See, too, *Poems, Essays, and Fragments*, by James Thomson ('B. V.'), ed. J. M. Robertson, 1892. Thomson published as 'B. V.,' *i.e.* 'Bysshe [after Shelley] Vanolis [Novalis, a favourite author, transposed].'

p. 121. **Meredith.** See *Letters of G. M.*, edited by his son, 2 vols., 1912, ii. 414, 423, 437, for his judgements on Thomson.

p. 125. **Roden Noel.** See *Selected Poems*, ed. Percy Addleshaw (with sympathetic essay and memoir), 1897.

p. 127. **Buchanan.** The fullest and most generous judgement on Buchanan that I know is in H. Walker's *Victorian Lit.*, 1910, pp. 575-585; though I cannot bring myself to go so far in praise.

p. 129. **Earl of Lytton.** No collected ed.; but *Selected Poems*, with Preface by his daughter Lady Betty Balfour, 1894. In this are not represented *The Wanderer*, 1859, or *Lucile*, which had been reprinted; nor yet the posthumous *Marah*, 1892, nor *King Poppy*. But there are extracts from (*e.g.*) *Clytemnestra*, 1855; *Fables in Song*, 1874; *Glenaveril*; and *Serbski Pesme, or National Songs of Servia*, 1867. These are not translated from original texts, but in part

from paraphrases in French prose, and are free in handling. The original introduction, pp. ix, xviii, is careless and ambiguous in explaining these facts; Lytton's elucidation can be found in the reprint of *Serbski Pesme* that occurs in his long work *Orval, or the Fool of Time*, etc., 1869, pp. 361-3; and see the remarks of Lady Betty Balfour in *Selected Poems*, pp. xii-xiii. But failing acquaintance with the Serbian originals, it is still obscure how much Lytton may have added. In any case, the little vol. contains some of his best and most spirited things, such as *A Conjugal Dispute*, *Fatima and Mehmed*, and *Bolozanovitch, the Knave*; the longest poem is *The Battle of Kossovo*. A penetrating review by George Meredith of *Chronicles and Characters*, and of Lytton's talent generally, in the *Fortnightly* for June 1868, is reprinted in Meredith's *Works* ('éd. de luxe'), vol. xxxiv., 1910.

p. 131. **Lord de Tabley.** The *Collected Poems* (1903) do not include (*e.g.*) *The Soldier of Fortune*. There is a memoir by Sir M. E. Grant-Duff in *The Flora of Cheshire* (1899), containing some of Lord de Tabley's letters; and a sketch by E. Gosse, *Critical Kit-Kats*, 1896. There are some admirable pages on this poet in H. Walker, *Victorian Literature*, 1910, pp. 561-5.

p. 137. **W. Johnson Cory.** *Extracts from Letters and Journals*, ed. F. W. Cornish, 1897. The ed. of *Ionica*, with introduction by A. C. Benson, n.d., reproduces that of 1891, adding some of the rejected poems of 1858 and 1877. Cory also wrote 'On the education of the reasoning faculty' in *Essays on a Liberal Education*, ed. F. W. Farrar, 1867. For more on him see E. Gosse, *Critical Kit-Kats*, 1891, pp. 308-18.

p. 142. **Irish Poets.** I draw largely on the valuable *Treasury of Irish Poetry in the English Tongue*, ed. Stopford A. Brooke and T. W. Rolleston, ed. 1905; also on *A Book of Irish Verse, Selected from Modern Writers*, by W. B. Yeats, 1895, which includes most of the really good things. The works of many of the writers have never been collected, but they are represented in *The Spirit of the Nation* and *The New Spirit of the Nation*. For Davis I have used the *National and Historical Ballads*, etc., Dublin, n.d., and Sir C. G. Duffy's excellent *Thomas Davis*, 1890; for Mangan, the *Poems*, 1903 (centenary edition), ed. D. J. O'Donoghue, and the *Prose Writings*, 1904, edited by the same; also his *Life of Mangan*. Of Sir S. Ferguson's *Lays of the Western Gael*, often reprinted, I have used the ed. of 1888.

p. 146. **Allingham.** See *W. A.: A Diary*, ed. Mrs. Allingham and D. Radford, 1907, and the introduction by Birkbeck Hill to the *Letters of D. G. Rossetti to W. A.*, 1897. There is a good critical note by Lionel Johnson (whence my quotation about *The Winding Banks of Erne*) in *Treasury of Irish Poetry*, 1905, pp. 364-7. There is a selection from the poems, ed. by Mrs. Allingham, in the 'Golden Treasury' series. The 'Patricius Walker' papers and other essays are collected in the posthumous *Varieties in Prose*, 3 vols., 1893.

p. 147. **Aubrey de Vere.** *Poet. Works*, 1884.

p. 148. **Barnes.** *Select Poems*, ed. Thomas Hardy, 1908.

p. 150, notes 1 and 2. **Waugh and Laycock.** Waugh's *Works*, 11 vols., 1881-9 (with pictures by Caldecott); and selection from ditto, 8 vols., 1892-3, with memoir by G. Milner. The late Mr. George Milner of Bowdon, a true enthusiast for local literature and poetry generally, also edited the *Collected Works* of Laycock, 1908. I owe to Miss May Yates, M.A., my introduction to

this bard, who appears not to be named in *Ency. Brit.*, or *Camb. Hist. Eng. Lit.*, or *Chambers's Cyclop. of Eng. Lit.*

p. 151. **Mahony.** See *The Works of Father Prout*, ed. Charles Kent, 1881.

p. 155. **Calverley.** *Complete Works*, with biographical sketch by Sir Walter Sendall, 1905. The short papers on metrical translation from Latin, at the end of the vol., are noteworthy; and Calverley hits the white when he remarks (*Works*, p. 502) that 'a Greek line is, in fact, a succession of vowels, separated by consonants introduced sparingly, and under such restrictions that it flows on uninterruptedly from syllable to syllable.'

p. 157. **London Lyrics.** The edition by Austin Dobson, 1904, with introduction and notes, indicates the nature of the twelve different edd. published in Locker-Lampson's lifetime, his mode of workmanship and revision, and the first date and place of issue of each poem; and also, pp. 193-6, his account, referred to in my text, of the *genre*; this was appended to all editions from 1870 onwards, except the final one of 1893.

p. 161. **Tupper.** I take some particulars from the art. in Chambers's *Cyclop. of Eng. Lit.*, iii. (1903), 491.

p. 163. **fiction.** For these chapters, xx.-xxv., I would repeat my acknowledgements to Walker's *Victorian Literature*; and also to the *Camb. Hist. Eng. Lit.*, vols. xii.-xiv., with their bibliographies. Also I would add Saintsbury, *The English Novel*, 1913, chaps. vi.-viii. (in 'Channels of Eng. Literature' series). Moreover, in view of the alarming fecundity of many of the lesser writers, it is hardly needful to confess that I have not read all the works of all the authors named; no one will ever do so; it must be enough, that I have seen all the books that are in any way pronounced upon and many more; and if the general verdicts are at all near the truth.

p. 164. **Hook.** See, for miscellanea, the *Choice Humorous Works*, 1902.

p. 166. **Such works.** Among them should perhaps be mentioned that ancient favourite, *Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green*, by 'Cuthbert Bede' (actually Edward Bradley), 1853, with its rattlepate jests, hoaxes, and 'flams'; decidedly of the 'earlier Victorian' style of humour, and just contemporary with *Mr. Sponge*.

p. 167. **Marryat.** See *Life and Letters*, 1892, ed. Florence Marryat.

p. 169. **Lover.** *Life*, by B. Bernard, 2 vols., 1874. There is an interesting introduction to *Handy Andy*, ed. 1907, by Charles Whibley.

p. 170. **Lever.** *Life*, by W. J. Fitzpatrick, 2 vols., 1879; and by E. Downey (2 vols., 1906), who corrects Fitzpatrick in many points, and prints a number of new letters, those written to John Blackwood being of most interest.

p. 171. **Carleton.** A good bibliography is found at the beginning of *The Life of William Carleton, being his Autobiography and Letters*, etc., by D. J. O'Donoghue, Dublin, 2 vols., 1896. The first vol. is Carleton's own; the second is Mr. O'Donoghue's continuation. There are many separate edd. of *Traits and Stories*, and of several of the more popular among the other books. Carleton was made much better known in England by the *Selections*, with introduction, by W. B. Yeats, 1889 ('Camelot Classics'). O'Donoghue, *Works of W. C.*, 4 vols., 1896.

p. 176. **Disraeli.** For bibliography see *Camb. Hist. Eng. Lit.*, xiii. 545-7. *Novels and Tales*, 11 vols., 1881. The standard *Life* is that by W. F. Monypenny, continued by G. E. Buckle, 6 vols., 1910-20; this contains some admir-

able accounts of Disraeli's novels. The last vol. (1920) came to hand too late to admit of comment here upon the brilliant fragment, reprinted from *Times* of many years ago (which I failed to look up), and baptized by Mr. E. Gosse *Falconet* (see his discussion with Mr. Buckle as to date of composition, in *Observer*, 20 and 27 June 1920).

p. 185. **New Toryism.** For a penetrating analysis of this see Cazamian, *Le Roman social*, pp. 329 ff., and the whole chapter.

p. 188. **Lytton.** See *Life*, by the second Earl of Lytton, 1913; and the admirable *Bulwer Lytton*, by T. H. S. Escott, 1913. There are various edd. ('Knebworth,' etc.) of the novels, and some of them include a number of Lytton's other works.

p. 189, note 1. **Paul Clifford.** On this *roman à thèse*, on its reflection of the spirit of the hour, and on its debt to Godwin, see Cazamian, *Roman social*, etc., pp. 79-81; the use of thieves' slang is noted as having possibly given a hint to Dickens.

p. 189, note 2. **A recent critic.** The late Lieut. W. T. Young, M.A., of the Royal Garrison Artillery, in *Camb. Hist. of Eng. Lit.*, vol. xiii. (1916), ch. xiii., p. 418. Lieut. Young was killed in France on July 12, 1917; his death was a loss to criticism, and I may take leave to single out, for appreciation and acknowledgement, his chapters in the *C. H. E. L.* on 'the lesser novelists' and on 'Meredith, Butler, and Gissing.'

p. 192. **Mrs Gore.** See Harold Child, *Camb. Hist. Eng. Lit.*, xii. 246-7; I must confess that his remarks induced me to read this one story, and that I have not brought myself to explore Mrs. Gore further, though the London Library catalogue has sixteen entries *s.v.*

p. 194. **Dickens.** See the full and nutritious bibliography by G. A. B[rown] in *Camb. Hist. Eng. Lit.*, xiii. 530-44, which includes list of other bibliographies, account of MSS., and of each work as it appeared; also lists of plays, illustrations, etc., etc. Among the critics of Dickens, I have found most profit in George Gissing, *C. D., a Critical Study*, 1898, and in Taine's chapter in his *Hist. de la Litt. anglaise.*

p. 195, note 1. **Carlyle.** Sir C. Gavan Duffy, *Conversations with C.*, p. 75. 'Thackeray had more reality in him and would cut up into a dozen Dickenses'; 'His [Dickens'] chief faculty was that of a comic actor.'

p. 195, note 2. **a fellow-craftsman.** Henry James, *Notes of a Son and Brother*, 1914, p. 237.

p. 196, note 1. **to make war.** On Dickens's campaigns, and on his 'philosophie de Noël,' see above all Cazamian, *Le Roman social*, pp. 210-314 (*e.g.*, p. 294, D. 'est un collaborateur artistique de Carlyle et de Lord Ashley'; and the reference, pp. 298-300, to the picture of a factory town in *Old Curiosity Shop*, chs. xliv.-xlv.).

p. 196, note 2. **shorthand.** Forster, i. 80; *Letters*, ii. 288 ('I daresay I am at this present writing [1856] the best shorthand writer in the world').

p. 197. **many a casual piece.** To *Boz* add *Sketches of Young Gentlemen* (1838) and *Sketches of Young Couples* (1840): slight things, a museum of minor manners, an odd reversion to the old-fashioned 'character' of two centuries back. In the other 'reprinted pieces' of early date may be noticed 'The Schoolboy's Story' and 'Our School,' and also 'The Detective Police' and similar papers, both as prophesying several things in the novels, and as showing some of Dickens's 'documents.'

p. 209. **workhouse evils.** Dickens was charged by Miss Martineau and others with imputing to the New Poor Law the evils of the old one; and he seems to have been in some confusion on the point; yet see Cazamian, *Le Roman social*, pp. 263-4, who shows that he was largely right after all.

p. 211, note 1. **titles.** Forster tells much of the pains taken by Dickens over his titles, and of the infallible evolution of the right one; *e.g.* for *Copperfield*, in *Life*, ii. 432-4; of which the title finally adopted on the green covers was *The Personal History, Adventures, Experience, and Observation of David Copperfield the Younger, of Blunderstone Rookery, which he never meant to be published on any account.* See too F. G. Kitton, *The Novels of C. D.*, 1897, p. 132, for the first shots (*Tom All Alone's*, etc.) at the title of *Bleak House.* Kitton's book is full of interesting and genial matter.

p. 211, note 2. **Hablôt Browne.** See Edgar Browne, *Phiz and Dickens*, 1913, p. 245: 'this tendency to introduce a beautiful trifle in attenuation of a grotesque belongs to Browne and to no other caricaturist of the time.' This remark refers to the earliest novels; later, speaking of *Chuzzlewit*, Mr. Edgar Browne points out, in respect of his father's art, that 'beauty, which had only been furtively shown, is now openly displayed,' and that 'there is a tendency to impart a certain dignified character to common objects.' This is true of Dickens also.

p. 214. **at Lytton's instance.** For Dickens's account of this, and the original ending, see Forster, *Life*, iii. 335-6. Lytton's 'such good reasons' are not given; they would have been of interest. In the uncontaminated version, Estella is widowed, and then marries 'a Shropshire doctor' who had befriended her against Drummle. She meets Pip in Piccadilly, while he is leading the child of Joe and Biddy, and kisses it ('she supposed the child, I think, to be my child'). She now has 'a heart to understand what my heart used to be.' We rather doubt that; but in any case this conclusion is a thousand times better than the received one.

p. 221. **Wilkie Collins.** See *Letters of Charles Dickens to Wilkie Collins, 1851-1870* (1892). There is an instructive criticism, pp. 151-3, of Reade's *Griffith Gaunt*, which had been assailed for impropriety. Dickens speaks up bravely for the book, but makes his (rather British) reserves about certain passages. Also see bibliographical details of the partnership in *Camb. Hist. Eng. Lit.*, *loc. cit.*

p. 225. **Reade.** C. L. Reade and C. Reade, *C. R., a Memoir*, 2 vols., 1887, contains much detail of interest about Reade's methods of work.

p. 231. **Thackeray.** Fullest bibliography in Lewis Melville, *W. M. T., a Biography*, 2 vols., 1910, ii. 149-347; see too *Camb. Eng. Lit.*, xiii. 525-30. A very full ed. is the 'Oxford' one, ed. G. Saintsbury, 17 vols., 1908, in which many stray papers were rescued for the first time. The 'biographical' ed., 13 vols., 1899, contains valuable matter in the introductions by Anne Thackeray Ritchie. FitzGerald's *Letters*, Thackeray's own letters of 1847-55 to the Brookfields (second ed., 1887), and his *Letters to an American Family*, ed. L. W. Baxter, 1904, may be named for further material. Mr. Melville's work gathers up much new matter (speeches, portraits, anecdotes, traits, etc.), and his preface gives a summary account of the biographical sources.

p. 234. **Charles de Bernard.** *Le Pied d'Argile* is adapted in *The Bedford Row Conspiracy*; or rather 'transfused,' in the phrase of Professor Saintsbury, *Hist.*

of the French Novel, ii. (1919), 293 ; *q.v.* for a comparison of the two novelists ; 'in some ways he was a kind of Thackeray several degrees under-proof—a small beer Thackeray that was a very excellent creature.'

p. 258. **George Eliot.** *Life, as related in her Letters and Journals*, ed. J. W. Cross, 3 vols., 1885 ; *Letters to Elam Stuart, 1872-80*, ed. R. Stuart, 1909. See too reff. in Spencer, *Autob.* Much matter of interest collected by Miss M. H. Deakin, *Early Life of G. E.* (preface by C. H. Herford), 1913. The reff. in text to critics are found in R. H. Hutton, *Essays, Theological and Literary*, 2 vols., 1871, ii. 294-367 ; Lord Acton, *G. E.'s Life*, in *Nineteenth Cent.*, March 1885, reprinted in *Historical Essays* ; and see especially his *Corresp.*, ed. Figgis and Laurence, 1917, in letter of 9th July 1885 ; for W. H. Henley, see *Views and Reviews* ; *Literature*, 1890. Sir L. Stephen's work, 1902, is in 'Eng. Men of Letters.' Many edd. of works ; *Essays and Leaves from a Note-book*, ed. C. L. Lewes, 1884, include some *Westminster* and other articles. See too art. by Mrs. Craigie in *Ency. Brit.* (eleventh ed.).

p. 276. **Trollope.** By far the best study is by T. H. S. Escott, *A. T., his Works, Associates, and Lit. Originals*, 1913 ; with bibliog. of first edd. by Margaret Lavington. The ed. of the 'Barsetshire Novels,' 8 vols., 1906, by Frederic Harrison, with his introductions, should be singled out.

p. 282. **The Brontës.** Literature very large. The chief biographical matter is found in Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of C. B.*, 1857 (of which the original unmodified form is reprinted in the 'Thornton' ed. of the novels (12 vols., 1901), with notes by Temple Scott and B. W. Willett) ; and in C. Shorter, *The Brontës, Life and Letters*, 2 vols., 1908 (over 700 letters, and a great body of material); in Shorter, *C. B. and her Circle*, 1896 ; and in the various publications of the Brontë Society, 1895 ff. Among the last may be named C. Vaughan, *C. and E. B., a Contrast* ; and Sir Sidney Lee, *C. B. in London.* There are many edd. of the sisters' works. There is a bibliography (which I have not seen) by B. Wood, for Brontë Soc., 1895. Among many criticisms should be mentioned (besides, of course, Swinburne's *Note on C. B.*) *Les Sœurs Brontë*, by Ernest Dimnet, 1910.

p. 286. **the mad wife.** See A. A. Jack, *Camb. Hist. Eng. Lit.*, xiii. 414-16, for an abstract of Sheridan Le Fanu's *Chapter in the History of a Tyrone Family*, first printed in *Dublin University Mag.*, Oct. 1839 ; it is, as Mr. Jack says, 'decidedly possible,' or probable, that the incident in *Jane Eyre* was suggested by a memory of this tale.

p. 288. **M. Heger.** See *Times*, July 29, 1913, for the four letters in French to him from C. B., with translation and remarks by F. Marion Spielmann ; and leading article, same date, in which it is observed : 'All her life she was in love with an ideal ; and so far as Heger was her ideal, she was in love with him and knew it.' I cannot see that the words 'in love' are applicable even in this sense.

p. 292. **more cheerful impression.** See too Mrs. Ellis Chadwick's art. on Emily Brontë in *Nineteenth Century*, Oct. 1919, pp. 977-87, bringing evidence as to Emily's popularity at the *pension* Heger, and of her visibly kind and sympathetic character.

p. 297. **Mrs. Gaskell.** See Sir Adolphus Ward, art. in *D. N. B.* ; *Camb. Hist. Eng. Lit.*, xiii. 373-6 ; and prefaces to the 'Knutsford' ed. of the *Works*, 8 vols., 1906, which contain much new matter, tracing of sources, etc.

See too Lady Ritchie's preface to her ed. of *Cranford*, 1891. For chronological order of publications, and bibliographies, see *Camb. Hist. Eng. Lit.*, xiii. 549-551. For Mrs. Gaskell's work as a political and social document, see Cazamian, *Le Roman social*, pp. 380-419, especially the long analysis of *Mary Barton*; and the allusion (pp. 406-7) to W. R. Greg's criticisms of it, in his *Mistaken Aims . . . of the Working Classes*, from the standpoint of the employer and of the old economy; on this too see Sir A. Ward, *C. H. E. L.*, *loc. cit.*

p. 304. **Miss Yonge.** See Christabel R. Coleridge, *C. M. Y., Her Life and Letters*, 1903; also Ethel Romanes, *C. M. Y., An Appreciation*, 1908 (adds interesting matter on Miss Yonge's connexion with the Oxford Movement, with Keble, etc., and also many summaries and sketches of the stories). Miss Coleridge gives a catalogue of works, staggering in their number; many have never been reprinted; but the more popular novels have passed through many edd. and are easy to find.

p. 307. **Mrs. Oliphant.** Her works have not been collected. The *Autobiography and Letters* were edited by Mrs. H. Coghill, 1899.

p. 309, note 1. **Charles Kingsley.** The *Letters and Memories of his Life*, edited by his wife, 2 vols., 1877, are included in vols. i.-iv. of the *éd. de luxe* of *Life and Works*, 19 vols., 1901-3. Neither this, nor even the *Works*, 28 vols., 1880-5, are complete: but most of Kingsley's best books are ubiquitous, in many edd.

p. 309, note 2. '**Parson Lot.**' These tracts do not seem to have been collected, but there are sufficient specimens given in the *Letters and Memories*. For an account of Kingsley's connexion with the Christian Socialists, and of the opposition to him, see the preface by Thomas Hughes to the popular ed. of *Alton Locke*, 1877; and notably Cazamian, *op. cit.*, ch. viii., especially pp. 448-59, 528-31.

p. 311, note 1. **Gibbon.** The story of Hypatia is told in *Decline and Fall*, ch. xlvii. In his preface Kingsley remarks: 'And thus an age, which, to the shallow insight of a sneerer like Gibbon, seems only a rotting and aimless chaos of sensuality and anarchy, fanaticism and hypocrisy, produced a Clement and an Athanase, a Chrysostom and Augustine.' Gibbon, from his own point of view, is by no means ungenerous towards Chrysostom, Athanase, and Augustine, or sparing in his praise of them. An instance of Kingsley's slapdash way of putting his case just wrong; for which, as we know, he was to suffer later.

p. 311, note 2. **rhythm** in last ch. of *Westward Ho!* See Saintsbury, *Hist. of Prose Rhythm*, pp. 400-5; I have applied the hint (see next note) to *The Heroes* too.

p. 313. **another movement.** The vertical bars mark the natural divisions of the passage, taken as prose; the vertical dots denote the verse-rhythm, which crosses the other, and on the whole, though not entirely, overpowers it. For this crossing of two tides I may refer to my paper *English Prose Numbers*, in *Essays and Studies of the Eng. Association*, vol. iv., 1913, pp. 29-54. Note that in the first quotation ('And he sang . . .') this crossing hardly occurs at all; *i.e.* it comes near to a verse in which there are very few 'substitutions,' and in which the 'feet,' as in prose, also begin with the beginning of a word, and end with the ending of the same or of another word.

p. 316. '**a public school.**' See art. on Hughes in *Ency. Brit.*, 11th ed., by T. Seccombe.

p. 324. **Meredith.** *The Letters of G. M.*, collected and edited by his son (W. M. Meredith), two vols., 1912, are the primary source for biography; for the best brief summary, see T. Seccombe, in *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, Suppl. ii. (1912). J. A. Hammerton, *G. M. in Criticism and Anecdote*, 1909; and valuable gleanings in *G. M., Some Early Appreciations*, selected by Maurice Buxton Forman, 1909 (including reviews by C. Kingsley, George Eliot, James Thomson, W. E. Henley, and Mark Pattison). The works are in many forms, the fullest being the 'memorial' ed., 27 vols., 1909-11, and the '*édition de luxe*,' 36 vols., and portfolio of illustrations, 1896-1911. Bibliography by Arundel Esdaile in vol. xxvii. of the former of these edd., and in vol. xxvi. of the latter (also separately, 1907); and there is further matter in the list by John Lane, appended to *G. M., Some Characteristics*, by W. Le Gallienne (1890, fifth ed. revised 1900). The alterations of text (most numerous in *Richard Feverel*, *Evan Harrington*, and *Harry Richmond*, and in certain poems) are collated in the large edd. in the same vols. as the bibliographies. Among the best critical books are those by G. M. Trevelyan, *The Poetry and Philosophy of G. M.*, 1906 (see too his valuable notes in the one-vol. ed. of *Poet. Works*, 1912); by Mrs. M. Sturge Henderson, *G. M., Novelist, Poet, Reformer*, 1907 (with chapters on some of the verse by Basil de Sélincourt); and by James Moffatt, *G. M., a Primer to the Novels*, 1909 (including clear useful abstracts of the plots). See also C. Photiadès, *G. M.*, Paris, 1910 (visit, interview, and *étude*); and *Camb. Hist. of Eng. Lit.*, xiii., 440-9 (1916), by W. T. Young. For the large literature of reference see the art. in *Dict. Nat. Biog.*: *e.g.*, H. M. Hyndman, *Reminiscences*, 1911; H. S. Salt, *Life of James Thomson* ('*B. V.*'), 1889; also Gosse, *Life of Swinburne*, 1917.

p. 332. **Odes on France.** See G. M. Trevelyan's notes in *Poet. Works*, one-vol. ed., 1912.

p. 334. **Modern Love.** See Trevelyan, *ibid.*; and for a running analysis, Mrs. Sturge Henderson, *G. M.*, ch. vi.

p. 338. **Sage Enamoured.** See again Mrs. Sturge Henderson, pp. 156-161; there are few better unravellers of Meredith's ideas.

p. 339, note 1. **the System** in *Richard Feverel.* See the review in *The Times*, Oct. 14, 1859 (quoted in *G. M., Some Early Appreciations*), for a pointed criticism of the irrelevance of the 'system' to the catastrophe; also (*ib.*, pp. 65-6) for a protest, on the ground of 'poetical justice,' against the sacrifice of Lucy: 'a barbarity like that for which Mr. Charles Dickens is so often answerable—that of *slaughtering the innocents out of pure sentimentalism* [italics mine]; and if he does not, like Mr. Dickens, linger on the agonies of his victims, he deserves equally to be haunted by the ghost of his most beautiful creation.' The objection taken in my text is somewhat different.

p. 339, note 2. **unlikely events.** See *R. Feverel*, ch. xlii.: ('Why can't you go to your wife, Richard?'—'For a reason you would be the first to approve, Austin.') What reason is meant? Is it simple remorse at having yielded to Bella,—remorse exasperated by the paternal 'system' which has trained him to a morbid overestimate of such a lapse ('his education had thus wrought him to think,' *ibid.*)? This seems hardly adequate; some link is wanting.

p. 340. **revision** of *Richard Feverel.* The original first four chapters were boiled down into one. Some tiresome humours were in this way struck out;

but so too were some treasures, such as Richard's tale of the midnight visit, the interview of the baronet and the doctor, and Letty's theft of the letter. The whole chapter ('A Shadowy view of Cœlebs Pater') on Mrs. Grandison was dropped, no doubt as a digression; but Carola Grandison is a loss. Many other brief passages are maimed without apparent reason. The dates when these changes were made are not wholly clear from the bibliography (*éd. de luxe*, vol. xxxvi.). The second ed., 1878, was 'altered and condensed'; while the cheap ed. of 1889 is described as the 'revised text of 1897' (the 'new popular' ed.).

p. 343. **Janet Ilchester.** Some noticeably beautiful scenes between Harry and Janet were cut down in the strict revision which the book underwent (bibliography does not say when, and I am unable to consult the various edd.). The chapter called 'A First Struggle with my Father,' preceding the present ch. xliv., went out; and also 'Janet and I,' and the long sequel, are lost in the present ch. liv. The long book is thus lightened, but much is lost.

p. 347. **Helene von Dönniges** (von Racowitza, finally Baroness Schewitsch): *Meine Beziehungen zu Ferdinand Lassalle*, Breslau, 1879, the work originally used for the novel; *Von Anderen und Mir*, Berlin, 1909; autobiography, Eng. tr., 1910. See too Elizabeth E. Evans, *F. L. und H. von D., a Modern Tragedy*, 1897. Kutschbach, *Lassalles Tod*, Chemnitz, 1880, puts a different complexion on many scenes, such as the important interview (*Tragic Comedians*, chs. xii., xvii.) between Helene and Lassalle's two emissaries, and his version is at Helene's expense. In 1892 Meredith issued a 'revised and corrected' ed., with prefatory note by Joseph Jacobs; this I have not seen, but only a few trifling changes are noted in the collation in *éd. de luxe*, xxxvi. 249. The general method is shown by the first interview of Alvan and Clotilde, part of which is straight from *Bez.*, pp. 38 foll., while the subject of their talk, Hamlet's madness, is invented. Kutschbach, p. 186, gives Lassalle's insulting letter to her father, in which he states that he has learned 'dass Ihre Tochter Helene eine verworfene Dirne ist'; this is 'the black thing flung at her in time to come'; *T. C.*, ch. v.; and ch. xvii., 'sending her to the deuce with the name she deserves,' in Tresten's phrase. She did not deserve *that*; the great Lassalle was a 'super-cad' if he wrote it; but she seems to have been bad or weak enough in any case. For an interesting memory of Helene as a precocious child, and of her parents' social Wednesday evenings at Munich in the Fifties, see Dr. E. K. Muspratt, *My Life and Work*, 1917, pp. 46-7.

p. 348, note 1. **Diana's action.** See *Letters*, ii. 529-32, 542-3, for Meredith's plea, as he tries in vain to bring one of his correspondents, a lady, to a charitable reading of this affair.

p. 348, note 2. **Mrs Norton.** At a meeting of the Irish Literary Society of London (reported in *Manchester Guardian*, 11 June 1897): Lord Dufferin explained the facts. One witness was Henry Reeve, of the *Edinburgh*, who effected the interview between Delane and Lord Aberdeen; and 'the truth came out at last in the *Greville Memoirs*, but it failed to overtake the slander about Mrs. Norton,' which 'had found place in the works of four historians,' and 'was current in society.' Thus Lord Dufferin; what I have seen of his kinswoman's tales and verses (*Tales and Sketches*, 1850; *The Lady of La Garaye*, 1862) indicates a good deal less wit and power than the work of her sister Helen, Lady Dufferin (Countess of Gifford), Lord Dufferin's mother; in

whose *Songs, Poems, and Verses* (1894) there is a memoir by him. They include the well-known *Irish Emigrant* and *Emigrant Ship*, and also the pleasant lines *The Gates of Somnauth*, which compare well with Macaulay's ferocious banter in his well-known speech.

p. 360. **an admirer.** C. Photiadès, *G. M.*, Paris, 1910.

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